West Wallsend & Holmesville
A Thematic Background History

by

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Opening of the West Wallsend Colliery, 1888

(All images are from the University of Newcastle Cultural Collections unless other wise cited.)

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Chronology – post-contact

Pre-Colliery

1798	– Awaba (Lake Macquarie) first entered by European ship
1829	– Grant of 2,500 acres to Captain James Ranclaud at Teralba
1861	– Small selections made in West Wallsend area
1860-1884	– Scattered small farms & orchards
1885	– West Wallsend Mining Company purchases land

Mining period

1888	– Mining Company subdivision and land sales
1889	– Public School opened
1891	– West Wallsend Co-operative founded
1894	– Floods destroy orchards of Joseph Holmes
1895	– School of Arts established
1901	– West Wallsend connected to water supply
1904	– Catholic Church built
1910	– Tram line opened
1923	– West Wallsend colliery closes
1929	– Mine lockout
1930s	– Depression – 'West Worldsend'
1930	– Steam tram closed
1945	– Closure of last local mine

Working further a field

1964	– West Wallsend Co-op merges with Newcastle Co-op
1964	– West Wallsend High School opens
1970	– Sugarloaf Reserve established
1979	– Explosion at West Wallsend No.2 colliery
1981	– Co-operative Store closes

Lessoning isolation

1985	– West Wallsend High School & Community Museum established
1989	– Earthquake destroys several buildings
1992	– First two-story housing development in West Wallsend
1993	– First major heritage study of communities
2011	– New residential development approved
2013	– Aboriginal Place – Butterfly Caves – declared

Introduction

The settlements of West Wallsend and Holmesville grew up as communities for those largely working in coalmines established within the immediate district. They are the two largest of a network of settlements in the area that include or included Ladysmith, Mafeking, O'Donnelltown, Barnsley, Fairley, Killingworth and Estelville. Close association was also maintained with Salty (Cockle) Creek, Minmi, Wallsend and Young Wallsend (Edgeworth).

From the 1880s until the 1930s the impact of coal mining was at its strongest and included collieries such as West Wallsend, Seaham No.s 1 & 2, Killingworth, Rhondda and Mount Sugarloaf.[1] In the inter-war years however nearby mines gradually closed and these communities shrank until new mines and then the steelworks gradually transformed them into dormitory suburbs for those working in mainly in Newcastle, at first with a focus on the BHP Steelworks and after the 1980s on a greater range of employments. In more recent times the relative isolation and greenness of the communities has begun to attract a more diverse socio-economic range of residents. This is an isolation that has recently begun to end with the nearby construction of new residential developments.

The history of these communities can be characterised as those of coal mining communities and this has meant they contain a number of features that are unusual within a broader Australian or even the NSW context outside the Hunter Valley and Newcastle. Such features range from the dominance of mining companies in owning much of the surrounding land to the issue of mine subsidence. The popularity of soccer, brass bands, and the strength and survival of the local co-operative store are also features that can be traced to the mining origins of many residents and families.

A feature of this history is that the relative isolation of West Wallsend/ Holmesville, caused in part by the loss of the good public transport it enjoyed until the 1930s, has meant that limited development has taken place and much of heritage value has been preserved. Another feature of perhaps greater significance is that this close knit working class area developed a sense of community forged by the Depression, the Co-operative, the coal mines and the geographic isolation that has many unique features only hinted at here.

While the sources for the history of the West Wallsend/Holmesville settlements are plentiful, much of interest remains to be researched. In particular the role of the mining lodges and of the coal unions in general are surprisingly under researched. Also the period of the 1960s to the 1980s is not well documented and much oral history research is needed to cover this period of seeming stagnation but in reality of great change. The uniqueness of the history of these communities is well recognised by their long-term residents but it is nevertheless in danger of being lost without more comprehensive historical research.

[1] The names of some collieries changed over time.

Aboriginal heritage – the Awabakal of Lake Macquarie

Lake Macquarie was known as Awaba and the various family groups around the lake became known as the Awabakal. The peoples of Lake Macquarie were related linguistically, with Threlkeld stating that "tribes within 100 miles" were able to "converse freely" after a "very short space of time". Threlkeld also reported relationships beyond this range with connections "in a kind of circle extending to the Hawkesbury and Port Stephens", including visits from people of the Hunter and Port Stephens.[2] Threlkeld specifically refers to a gathering at his mission (near present day Toronto) of the "Sugarloaf Mountain and Main River" people to witness the punishment of a doctor whose patient had died.[3]

The Pambulong clan of the Awabakal people inhabited the area around West Wallsend, west of Lake Macquarie through to Mount Sugarloaf. It has been suggested that the area would have constituted a route for people travelling between Mount Sugarloaf, Lake Macquarie and Hexham Swamp.[4] Also, being a little away from the Lake, but well drained by creeks, fish among other things would have been an attractive food source in the West Wallsend/Holmesville area, as it was to white settlers in later times; the nearby uplands of Mt Sugarloaf providing yet another range of eatables. Such fishing and gathering being done by the women and children, while shelter was provided by caves in the ranges or gunyahs made of bark.[5] One such cave - the Butterfly Cave - was declared an Aboriginal Place in 2013. The Butterfly Cave is a traditional women's meeting and ceremonial place and is still used by Awabakal women for cultural teaching and learning purposes.[6]

The convict settlement established at Newcastle soon brought the usual difficulties associated with such contact, including disease and population decline.[7] In 1825 the Rev Threlkeld established his mission at Lake Macquarie, but despite his sympathetic efforts his time spent up until 1841 oversaw the gradual destruction of any independent native culture.[8] By the time significant selections or settlement took place in the West Wallsend/Holmesville area, the local native population was already greatly diminished, with Threlkeld reporting few people by the 1840s remaining around the lake.[9]

However the Awabakal as a people continued to survive and in 1976 the Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Cooperative Limited was established and today provides a range of health and other services.[10] In a 1986 assessment the West Wallsend locality was identified as an archaeologically sensitive area.[11] Some 14

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[2] Haglund, *Assessment of the Prehistoric Heritage in the Lake Macquarie Area*, p.14 & p.10.
[3] Haglund, *Assessment of the Prehistoric Heritage in the Lake Macquarie Area*, p.22.
[4] Mills, *An Indigenous and Non-Indigenous assessment of ... Lot 103 and Lot 105 ... Estelville near Newcastle*, p.19.
[5] Turner & Blyton, *The Aboriginals of Lake Macquarie*, pp.13-14.
[6] Department of Environment & Heritage - http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal places/ButterflyCave.htm
[7] Turner & Blyton, *The Aboriginals of Lake Macquarie*, pp.28-30.
[8] Turner & Blyton, *The Aboriginals of Lake Macquarie*, pp.30-33.
[9] Haglund, *Assessment of the Prehistoric Heritage in the Lake Macquarie Area*, pp.15-16.
[10] Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Cooperative Limited - http://www.awabakal.org
[11] Haglund, *Assessment of the Prehistoric Heritage in the Lake Macquarie Area*, Fig 6, p.41.

axe grinding grooves, for example, have been identified on a tributary of Cocked Hat Creek and 7 on Cockle Creek, as well as 3 camp sites and 6 areas of potential archaeological deposit.[12] As of 2008 a search of AHIMS (Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System) revealed at least 10 Aboriginal sites within the West Wallsend/Holmesville area.[13] The 2013 declaration of the Butterfly Cave Aboriginal Place referred to above being the latest recognition of this sensitivity.

Land tenure

The first grant of land in the area appears to have been 2,560 acres to Captain James St James Ranclaud, who in 1829 was running cattle on his land "at the head of Lake Macquarie".[14] This grant may not have extended as far as where West Wallsend/Holmesville later became established and little beyond running cattle seems to have occurred until selections began to be made in the 1860s when a few around what became West Wallsend/Holmesville appear to have be used as farms. By 1865 there was a scattered community of orchardists, dairy farmers and vegetable farmers and even an irregular school.[15]

Some of these selections plus a later set of short-lived selections in the 1880s were combined into the "Teralba Estate" and sold to the West Wallsend Coal Company in 1885. The proprietors of the "Teralba Estate" were T. Garrett, Edward Greville, J. Humphrey, Mary Lane, Mary P. Lane, Henry Lane and George Lane, all selectors from 1862 to 1884; the major portion of the land, however, being that of George and Henry Lane selected only in 1884.[16]

For the West Wallsend Coal Company the purchase of land freehold meant that royalties were not payable.[17] For the community of West Wallsend, subdivided from this 2,926 acre purchase, it has meant being surrounded by and often requiring to obtain land for community purposes from the various coal companies that have continued to own the nearby property. However some scattered plots of land remained that were not owned by the West Wallsend Coal Company, at least for a time; these included 60 acres of Richard O'Donnell, 40 acres of Joseph Notley, 67 acres of James Price, and some larger land plots belonging to Joseph and Samuel Holmes.[18]

West Wallsend was based on a subdivision plan prepared by the West Wallsend Coal Company to developed a town to house the workers it knew it would need to obtain what it described as "a practically inexhaustible supply of proved

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[12] Mills, *An Indigenous and Non-Indigenous assessment of … Lot 103 and Lot 105 … Estelville near Newcastle*, pp.9-10.

[13] Insite Heritage, *Aboriginal & Historical Archaeological Assessment Land Off George Booth Drive, Edgeworth*, p.14, Figure 2.

[14] *Sydney Gazette*, Tuesday 29 September 1829, p.4.

[15] Clouten, *Reid's Mistake*, pp.144-145.

[16] *Memorandum of Association of the West Wallsend Coal Company*, 1885, p.31.

[17] *Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday 16 July 1885, p.2.

[18] Parish Map, County of Teralba, 1897 [http://images.maps.nsw.gov.au/pixel.htm#]

coal".[19] The West Wallsend township was surveyed and subdivided in 1886 (DP 2252) with a second subdivision in 1889 (DP 2253) and a third subdivision declared in 1901 (DP 3805). The *Newcastle Morning Herald* reported that at the first auction in 1887 many blocks were "knocked down" for £50 with many buyers coming from the nearby coal mining community of Minmi.[20]

Holmesville developed a little later than West Wallsend and differs in that it was a private subdivision of land owned by Joseph Holmes. The purchases of lots in Holmesville were however the same workers and miners associated with the same mines as those in West Wallsend. Joseph Holmes selected land around 1863 near what became Holmesville, though much of the land he later subdivided into Holmesville was granted to him in the 1880s, presumably with subdivision in mind. This later land was granted to Joseph Holmes as "mining conditional purchase", that is, provided mining improvements were made. Joseph Holmes had worked in the mines himself and presumably provided sufficient improvements to pass inspection by the Local Land Board.[21]

The settlement of Killingworth appears to have been like West Wallsend a subdivision of coal company land begun around the same time as West Wallsend itself.[22] Barnsley was another private subdivision that predated West Wallsend, Holmesville and Killingworth, when in 1882 J. C. Bonarius began to sell allotments for £1 down and one shilling per week.[23] Another later attempt at a private subdivision occurred at Fairley that was associated with the Seaham No.2 colliery (Archibald Fairley was the superintendent of Seaham Collieries). However while several cottages were reported in 1907 this settlement is now abandoned.[24]

Ladysmith and Mafeking represent what appear to have been near squatter settlements with no official subdivisions or perhaps any legal claim to the land their cottages once occupied. One family however does claims to have had a 99 year lease which expired in 1969.[25] Although both named after Boer War battles, both seemed to have begun in close association with West Wallsend, or even before in the case of Ladysmith, perhaps as camps for timber prop cutters.[26] Both settlements had residents into the 1950s, though both are now deserted. While the nearby O'Donnelltown was never really a 'town' or even a settlement but rather the scattered houses of the Donnell family, who did own at least some of the land, occupying a small valley between West Wallsend and Mount Sugarloaf.

West Wallsend/Holmesville and the smaller scattered settlements of the districts have largely been surrounded by land owned by coal mining companies. In West Wallsend itself a 1951 plan to build of 100 Housing Commission homes was the

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[19] *Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday 16 July 1885, p.2.
[20] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Monday 22 August 1887, p.5.
[21] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Friday 28 April 1893, p. 7.
[22] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 28 September 1889, p.4.
[23] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Tuesday 21 February 1882, p.2.
[24] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Tuesday 8 March 1910, p.6 & Tuesday 19 November 1907, p.3.
[25] Andrews, *Footprints of Ladysmith*, p.3.
[26] Andrews, *Footprints of Ladysmith*, p.3.

first major change to this balance.[27] Though it seems not so many houses were in fact ever built. In very recent times a major new subdivision has been approved near West Wallsend/Holmesville on land that is no longer only coal company owned.[28]

Mining - coal

The character of West Wallsend/Holmesville has been developed primarily through their history as coal mining communities. Newcastle itself was developed in part from its coal deposits and the nearby Wallsend coal mines' existing reputation appears to have been consciously used in naming the new mine, and consequently its new community, West Wallsend.

In 1886 a new railway line passed through Wallsend and this allowed potential coal companies to build relatively short connecting links that enabled new mines to be established.[29] This is what inspired the new West Wallsend Coal Company, founded with seven shareholders, mostly mine owners and lawyers from Sydney, with £90,000 capital.[30] Their West Wallsend Coal Company colliery commenced production in July 1888 after some years of lead up work. The Monkwearmouth Coal Co. colliery also began producing in the area in March 1890 after 4 years of preparation, becoming the Seaham Colliery in 1891-92. West Wallsend Extended (Killingworth) opened in 1892 and Seaham No. 2 was opened in 1905. These mines and others formed the economic basis of the West Wallsend/Holmesville group of communities. As these mines ceased production the impact was consequently great. The West Wallsend Colliery closed in 1923; West Wallsend Extended (Killingworth) ceased production for 4 years in December 1910 after an explosion, and was closed in 1930, but was in operation again from 1950 to 1956. Seaham No. 1 closed in 1932; and Seaham No. 2 in 1945.[31] By 1972 only two small mines were operating – Mount Sugarloaf and Killingworth.[32]

All of these mines seemed to have begun as men only mines, meaning the men worked with picks and no machines, and even by 1912 only the Rhondda Colliery was a machine mine.[33] Pit ponies were however extensively used, with some looked after by Richard Frith of Holmesville after his brickyards closed down as a holster/veterinarian in Holmesville.[34] An ostler who lived at Ladysmith is reported working at the Stockington No.1 mine in 1950 and the Mount Sugarloaf Colliery was till using pit ponies in the 1950s.[35]

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[27] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Monday 10 December 1951, p. 1.

[28] BHP acquired some of the surrounding land and then passed it onto the Hunter Development Board. Other parcels are owned by the Hammersmith subsidiary of the Roche Group.

[29] Clouten, *Reid's Mistake*, p.262.

[30] *Memorandum of Association of the West Wallsend Coal Company*, 1885, p.6-7.

[31] Lake Macquarie City Council, *Lake Macquarie: Past and Present*, p.98.

[32] *Cardiff, West Wallsend Planning District*, p.LS689.

[33] Danvers Power, *Coalfields & Collieries of Australia*, p.261.

[34] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.38 & Price, *Holmesville – One Man's Vision*, pp.53-54.

[35] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Monday 2 October 1950, p.2 & 'Sugar Loaf Colliery' - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3n3QGsOSJ8

Environment

From a hunter-gather perspective the environment of the West Wallsend/ Holmesville district was perhaps a very rich one. Drained by Cockle Creek and its tributaries, it lies between the rugged Mount Sugarloaf and Lake Macquarie, the largest salt water lake in Australia, bounded by swamps providing fresh water and diverse habitats. The Mount Sugarloaf range provided shelters, the many springs and seepages provided water in dry weather, and materials for stone tools were plentiful in the cherts from the coal seams.[36]

For the European arrivals the coal seams underlying the land of West Wallsend/Holmesville were undoubtedly the prime environmental feature that influenced the growth and development of the communities. Another feature, associated with coal prominent enough to be mentioned in the West Wallsend Coal Company's initial prospectus of 1885 was timber. This was one of the "salient advantages" of the land, which was "covered by a forest of valuable timber".[37] Timber at this time was essential for the mines as pit props, with Mount Sugarloaf also providing this resource as nearer supplies were used up.

Sam Leggett delivering pit timber to West Wallsend Colliery.
Shepherd & Co. photograph, courtesy Mr. Carson, Holmesville.

An abundance of timber was significant for the development of the West Wallsend and nearby coal mines.

[36] Haglund, *Assessment of the Prehistoric Heritage in the Lake Macquarie Area*, p.6.
[37] *Memorandum of Association of the West Wallsend Coal Company*, 1885, p.6-7.

The general environment of both West Wallsend and Holmesville consists of rolling hills, which give numerous views from various locations while overall the landscape is dominated by Mount Sugarloaf to the west. The proximity to Mount Sugarloaf and its bush also provided a playground for children and adults in addition to its timber resources. While the road up to the summit was not built until "dole days", many would nevertheless walk up to the summit for picnics, and generations of boys hunted after bee hives and used shanghai's to shoot locusts and cicadas, while parrots were caught using poles and "snares made out of horses' tails". The "lillypilly trees provided ammunition for your shanghai. When the blackberries were in, you'd be there with your kerosene tin."[38]

The small valley between Mount Sugarloaf and West Wallsend, known as O'Donneltown, also provided bush picnic spots for residents not only of West Wallsend and Holmesville, but for those from Newcastle and its suburbs as well. These were reached by rail and tram as far as West Wallsend and walking thereafter.

In the opposite direction, to the south-east of West Wallsend, Cockle Creek – also known as Salty Creek – was significant as both a place of recreational swimming and also fishing. Though in general the area did not have plentiful surface water, with the residents relying on numerous wells or on the dam built by the colliery just to the north of West Wallsend.

In 1971 the Mount Sugarloaf Reserve was declared, recognising this previously privately leased area as one deserving of protection.[39] In more recent times mine subsidence attributed to the Glencore West Wallsend Colliery has cause much damage within the Mt Sugarloaf Conservation Area.[40]

Protection was also gradually extended to the built environment as the well-preserved nature of the mining communities was recognised. This 'heritage' perspective for West Wallsend and Holmesville began in the 1990s with a major heritage study and has continued with many assessments and protection orders since.[41]

Townships

- **West Wallsend (aka Westy)**

Nearby Wallsend (named after Wallsend on the River Tyne in the United Kingdom) was known for having the best coal and this seems have prompted the use of 'West Wallsend' as a name for both the coal company and the subsequent town. A town whose lay out and subdivision was undertaken by the West

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[38] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.4.

[39] Reynolds, *Early West Wallsend*, pp.193-198

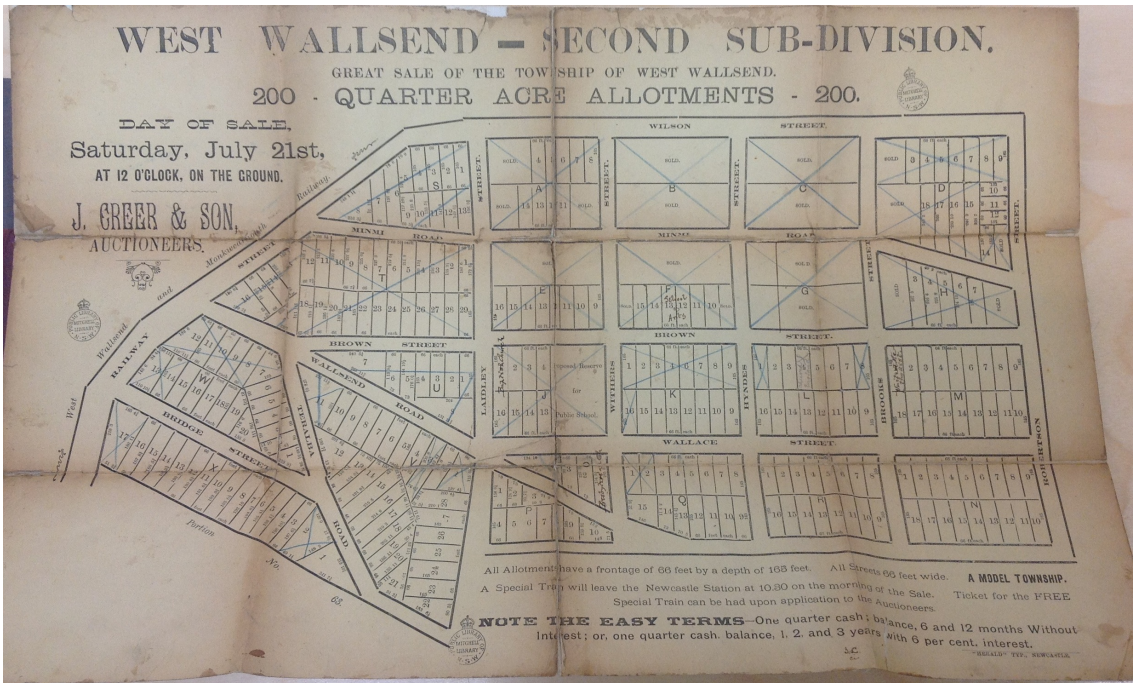
[40] *Sydney Morning Herald*, "Mine subsidence devastates Sugarloaf conservation area", August 28, 2013 - http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/mine-subsidence-devastates-sugarloaf-conservation-area-20130828-2spuc.html

[41] Suters, Doring, Turner, *City of Lake Macquarie Heritage Study – West Wallsend* & *City of Lake Macquarie Heritage Study – Holmesville*.

Wallsend Coal Company for the purpose of both helping finance its mining operations through the sale of land and providing itself with a workforce in close proximity.

The streets of West Wallsend were mostly named after directors and others associated with the Company, an exception being Renwick St, named after a depression era doctor.[42] During 1886-88 some 40 workers were employed on sinking the shaft and other preparation work for the start of the mine. These workers were housed in huts clustered around the mine. By 1888 it was reported that a large hotel was under construction, a post office had been established, a petition for a public school had been submitted and arrangements were underway for the construction of the school, and the company had granted sites for churches to any denomination who wished to construct a place of worship.[43]

In 1900 West Wallsend is reported to have a population of 3,000, with many in temporary accommodation during the week and returning to their permanent homes on the weekend due to a shortage of houses. At this time the School of Arts building was being planned and the Church of England, Methodists and Presbyterians had dedicated buildings that pre-date their current church buildings and the co-operative was considered to be well established.[44]



The sale of lots provided the Coal Mine with a nearby workforce.

[42] Reynolds, *Early West Wallsend*, p.322.
[43] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 4 July 1888, p.3.
[44] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Wednesday 3 October 1900, p.3.

In 1901 the West Wallsend population was 2344 in 481 houses.[45] By 1905 the area was said to have a population of 2894, which seems to have been a peak.[46] A population of over 5,000 or even 6,000 is sometimes reported at this period but this seems to have included areas such as Minmi well outside West Wallsend and perhaps a large "camping" population. In a 1903 publican's license application the applicant claims West Wallsend's population is 5,000, while the police opposing the licence assert "West Wallsend proper" is only 2,500.[47] By 1911 the population was 567 homes and 2723, numbers that remained steady up to 1921 with 574 homes and 2752 persons. After the West Wallsend Colliery closure in 1923, the 1929 lockout and the beginning of the Great Depression, the population had by 1933 fallen to some 517 homes and 2023 persons and after the war in 1947 was only 475 homes and 1683 persons. These figures may underestimate numbers as the West Wallsend Police District, which covered a wider area, reported 4,000 people in 1932.[48]

By 1954 numbers had begun to rise again to 2401; and in 1961 was 2687; by 1966 it was 2719; and in 1971 residents numbered 2910.[49] The 1980s and 1990s saw another period of falling population and in 2011 the number of residents was recorded as 1,714, though living in a larger number of homes than ever before at 687.[50]

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the decline of many regional centres as access to cars and better roads allowed people to more easily travel to major commercial centres. West Wallsend was no exception to this and as a 1972 council report put it:

> This centre is the archetype of a once prosperous but now derelict centre. The decline of local population and the vastly increased mobility of shoppers have caused a rapid decline in the last few decades.[51]

However this period of stagnation meant that much of the environment and architecture of its most prosperous period was preserved. By the early 21st century West Wallsend's semi-rural setting and its impressive collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial and community buildings was recognised as exceptional in the region.

- **Holmesville**

Holmesville differs from West Wallsend in that it was created by the private subdivision of land owned by Joseph Holmes. It owes its existence to the same mining activity, but was not a direct creation of any mining company. In fact it

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[45] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 16 April 1901, p.3.
[46] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Saturday 23 December 1905, p.3.
[47] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 3 April 1903, p.7.
[48] Lake Macquarie City Council, *Lake Macquarie: Past and Present*, p.99 & *Sydney Morning Herald,* Friday 22 July 1932, p.9.
[49] *Cardiff, West Wallsend Planning District*, p.LS661.
[50] ABS website – West Wallsend: http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/SSC12479
[51] *Cardiff, West Wallsend Planning District*, p.LS687.

seems Joseph Holmes originally planned to take advantage of the opening of the West Wallsend Colliery and began selling his lots in direct competition to those sold by the West Wallsend Coal Company in West Wallsend. So much so that his advertising declared that, "Working Men should buy here, because they would then be assisting one of themselves".[52]

However despite the advertisements appearing right up until the day of the sales, no lots were sold. In fact the subdivision did not go through until some 10 years later in 1898 by which time West Wallsend was well established. Did Holmes simply try to sell before all the legal niceties were finished, or did those with an interest in the West Wallsend sales interfere in some manner?

When the Holmesville lots did begin to sell, it was one with streets mostly named after Holmes' family members, with St Helen's Street called after a village in Lancashire presumed to have been near where Joseph Holmes originated.[53] Sales of lots in Holmesville were slow with only gradual growth into the early 20th century. In 1905 the population of Holmesville was only 677 compared to 2894 in West Wallsend.[54] Joseph Holmes himself continued to work in the mines, as did his eldest son Joseph who was killed in a mine accident. Another son, William Holmes, however erected many of the first houses on the plots sold.[55]

In 1903 Holmesville was reported to have a population of about 500 in 98 houses of mostly four rooms but with no "public buildings, schools, or churches" but there were "two or three shops".[56] By the following year however there was both a Congregational Church and a 20-room hotel, while a progress committee was claiming credit for having the road to West Wallsend improved.[57]

Continuing figures for Holmesville's population are difficult to find, but in the 1920s it seems to have dropped. The closing of mines and the need for people to find work elsewhere often meant houses moved with them and it was reported that 90 to 100 cottages were moved at this time.[58] In the 2011 census Holmesville's population was 1,419 living in 509 homes.

- **Connected settlements**

West Wallsend/Holmesville are merely the two biggest of a network of separated settlements that grew up in association with the various coal mines of the area. (For details of the origins of these settlements as either subdivisions of coal or private land see Land Tenure above.) These settlements are Ladysmith, Mafeking, Killingworth, Barnsley, Fairley, O'Donelltown & Estelville. Of these only Barnsley, Killingworth continue today (with the Seaham Street part of Estelville now incorporated into Holmesville).

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[52] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 31 August 1889, p.8.
[53] Price, *Holmesville – One Man's Vision*, p.42.
[54] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Saturday 23 December 1905, p.3.
[55] Price, *Holmesville – One Man's Vision*, p.44.
[56] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Tuesday 13 January 1903, p.7.
[57] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Friday 11 March 1904, p.7.
[58] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 25 August 1920, p.6.

Ladysmith and Mafeking are of special interest in that they never appear to have been officially established. Ladysmith had a population of perhaps 20 families in the 1930s and Mafeking was even smaller.[59] It was common when West Wallsend's population was growing rapidly in the 1890s and 1900s for people to camp and it is possible that these settlements grew up around what had originally been such camps.[60]

Migration & Ethnic influences

A high proportion of the miners who originally settled in West Wallsend and Holmesville appear to have been from Scotland, northern England and Wales, in other words from mining associated districts in Britain. Statistics are difficult to come by, but one survey in 1907 by the local Churches seems to confirm this. According to this survey the numbers of families associated with the various denominations was: Presbyterians 173, Methodists 140, Anglican 153, Salvation Army 15, and Catholic 44.[61]

This is not an entirely accurate survey, with the Congregationalists and Baptists entirely absent and the Catholics seemingly underrepresented. However the figures do suggest that the proportion of people from Scotland and Wales was much higher than the average in NSW and the Irish population lower than usual.

In addition to those from Britain and Ireland there were a number of people from other countries, but not sufficient it would seem to create a cultural group or distinct community. There was for example Mr. Joseph Cristani, who died in Holmesville in 1950, aged 83. Mr Cristani was born in Sondolo, northern Italy, and had come to Australia around 1895 and to Holmesville about 1907 to work as a miner in such collieries as Seaham Nos. 1 and 2.[62]

Chinese people were also present in West Wallsend and Holmesville, though not in large numbers. At least one Chinese market garden is recorded at Cockle Creek and at least one vegetable hawker, named Tommy On Yow was present in Holmesville, while another person who sold drapery door-to-door would store his baskets with a local women in Holmesville while on his trips to China.[63]

Transport

The communities were established close to the various mines of the district and this meant that for most mine workers their workplaces were within walking distance, even if this was a walk of several kilometres. However for the coal companies a rail network was required to deliver the coal to Newcastle and this was established along with the first mines in the late 1880s. While a passenger service was always associated with these coal trains this was not felt to be

[59] Andrews, *Footprints of Ladysmith*, p.7.
[60] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 3 April 1903, p.7.
[61] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Friday 6 September 1907, p.6.
[62] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 23 December 1950, p.6.
[63] Rees, *Our Lady of Good Counsel*, p.5 & Price, *Holmesville*, p.55.

reliable and buses (at first horse drawn) and later a steam tram service were established connecting West Wallsend/Holmesville with Wallsend and services to Newcastle.

The first transport services in West Wallsend were double-decker, open-topped horse buses, drawn by four horses and known as 'Yankees'. In 1901 a license to run "a Yankee 'bus between Wallsend and West Wallsend" was granted to Mr. David Broadfoot. These Yankee 'buses were likely from Sydney where they had been replaced by the electric trams. This service ran until 1910 when it was replaced by the new (steam) tram.[64]

The horse drawn buses operated in parallel with the passenger services associated with the coal companies private railways as the passenger services were limited by the demands of coal transportation. The opening of the West Wallsend Colliery in 1888 included the opening of the companies' private rail from West Wallsend through to the junction with the main line at Cockle Creek and on to Newcastle and its associated passenger service.[65] Later another line ran to Holmesville from the junction at Cockle Creek to service the Seaham No.1 and No.2 collieries as well as that at West Wallsend.

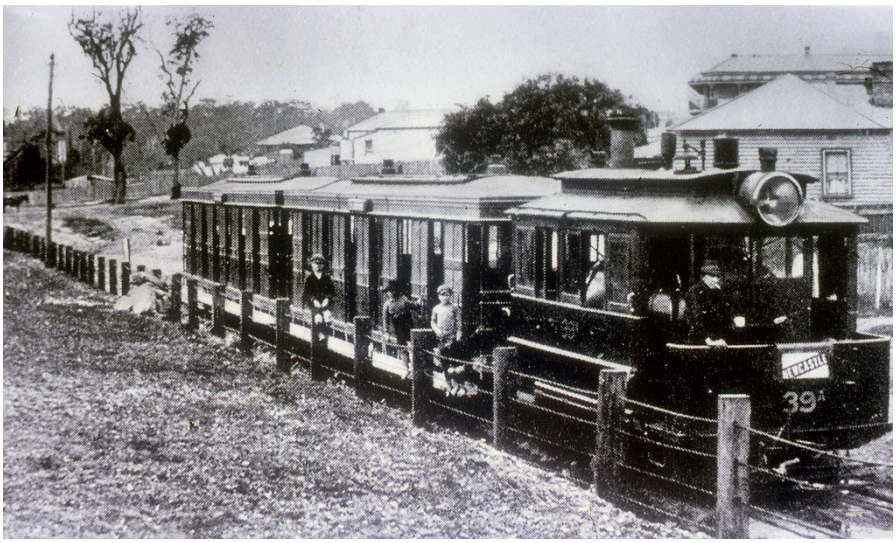
The passenger service of these coal carrying lines, where each company reputedly took it in turns to supply and operate the railway, included stations at West Wallsend, at the corner of Laidley and Wilson Streets, as well as at Holmesville and Barnsley.[66] Around 1910 all these stations received new buildings and platforms.[67] Another station south of Bridge Street was for the mine manager only. Originally of wood, that at West Wallsend at least was rebuilt in brick in the 1920s. The lines crossed roads at three points at which were located fences with gatekeepers.

West Wallsend station, 1898. The Museum Hotel can be seen on the left.

[64] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 29 June 1901, p.7; *People*, Saturday 11 November 1905, p.3 & *Back to "Westy"*, p.36.
[65] Lake Macquarie City Council, *Lake Macquarie: Past and Present*, p.98.
[66] Price, *Holmesville*, p.86.
[67] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 14 April 1910, p.5.

While only providing a morning and evening passenger service, the trains played a significant part in the life of the community. The "cock-a-doodle-doos" of the approaching trains signaling special events such as the return of soldiers or the success of the local soccer team. While there was no station at Killingworth, special trains would stop outside the Killingworth Hotel and people would use stools to get on and off the train. The rail passenger service continued until 1930, even after the closure of the West Wallsend mine in 1923, with all services ceasing in 1938.[68] Suggestions by the West Wallsend Amenities and Progress Committee in 1948 that the NSW government purchase the old collieries line and make it a passenger service was rejected partly on the grounds that motor transport and the bus service would not make it viable.[69]

Despite the passenger service associated with the private coal lines, agitation for improved transport in the form of a tram connection from West Wallsend began as early as 1900. It was not until 1910 however that such a connection was opened.[70] This service began in September 1910 with a line running along Lake Road, Glendale before heading west along main road Edgeworth and through Young Wallsend, Estelville, and Holmesville before terminating at West Wallsend at the corner of Railway and Laidley Streets, between the Museum Hotel and the railway station for a return trip. This tram service was steam powered and at 25 kilometers, and taking an hour and 32 minutes, it is still considered to be the longest length of steam tram in Australia. Another feature of this service was that the "Westy" trams used coal rather than coke, thus producing more smoke than trams operating closer to the urban areas. Never a very profitable line, it was never electrified before its closure in 1930. During this time at least three deaths occurred in three separate accidents.[71]



The steam tram at West Wallsend, c.1914

[68] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.101.
[69] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Friday 20 August 1948, p.2.
[70] Price, *Holmesville*, p.87.
[71] Barnes, *The "Westy" Tramlines*, pp.3-4; Mills, *Management Plan for the Remains of the West Wallsend Tramway*, p.23 & *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.65.

The tram service ended the horse drawn 'Yankee 'buses' but by 1924 they were competing with buses again when Johnson's Motor Service ran routes around West Wallsend district, including to the mines, as did Young & Greens. The trams ran only once every one and half hours while the bus routes ran to Newcastle, Warner's Bay and to the Seaham Colliery.[72] After the closure of the tram in 1930 bus services varied with in 1967 no direct service to Newcastle, though there was one to the Newcastle Steelworks. In 1979 the Ross Bus Service also operated.[73] Bus services today are infrequent and most people rely upon cars to get in and out of West Wallsend/Holmesville.

The growing access to cars by the 1970s transformed the transport situation for many, as did the construction of the Newcastle Freeway running just past West Wallsend with a nearby turnoff. This put the northern suburbs of West Wallsend within only a little more than an hours drive of northern Sydney, and a recent extension of the system into the Hunter Valley makes Maitland 15 minutes distant.

While the rails of the tramway were removed in 1937 the line itself, including embankments and cuttings, remained visible well into the 21st century.[74] The last evidence of Australia's longest steam tramway were removed in 2012 as part of a new residential development despite a 1993 heritage study recommendation that it be preserved and used as a cycleway, numerous management plans recognising the heritage value of the tramway, its recognition as having high regional and very high local significance by Lake Macquarie Council, and in 2012 community opposition and efforts to have the tramway incorporated into the newly established Newcastle system of cycleways.[75]

Communication – postal

With the establishment of West Wallsend postal services were essential and these began in July 1888 with the appointment of a postmistress, Miss Blanche Clinton at £10 per year. A series of appointments followed with the remuneration rapidly increasing as the volume of mail also increased, with £30 being paid in 1890. In 1891 a telegraph office introduced, which seems to have simply been a telephone line to Wallsend where the actual telegraph operator was. In 1906, a separate Post Office building was constructed (it remains the Post Office today), and in 1911 a telephone exchange opened.[76]

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[72] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 17 April 1926, p.7.

[73] Price, *Holmesville*, pp.83-84.

[74] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 23 March 1937, p.6.

[75] Suters, Doring, Turner, *City of Lake Macquarie Heritage Study – Railways & Tramways*, Item RT – 01, Mills, *An Indigenous and Non-Indigenous assessment of … Lot 103 and Lot 105 … Estelville near Newcastle*, pp.25-29, & Damon Cronshaw, "Residents push for tram line heritage listing to hamper development", *The Herald*, June 17, 2012 - http://www.the herald.com.au/story/204755/residents-push-for-tram-line-heritage-listing-to-hamper-development/

[76] Cremer, *West Wallsend Post Office,* pp.1-6.

At Holmesville a Post Office was opened in September 1914 that was known as 'Estelville' until July 1968.[77]

Utilities

As very little permanent water was to be found, the West Wallsend Coal Company constructed a dam to service both the colliery and the township. For most families it was necessary to dig a well in the back yard or to collect rainwater.[78] West Wallsend began to be connected to an outside water supply around 1902.[79]

A well that was uncovered in Wilson St shows that it had been "excavated from the sandstone using explosives as indicated by drill holes still evident" in the well walls. "Areas where the sandstone had broken away had been infilled with brick to provide support."[80]

A West Wallsend Fire Brigade was established by 1910, with phones at several locations for raising an alarm, while at Holmesville a hose cart was stored at 34 George St to be used at need.[81] These would have been volunteer based and were still volunteer in 1952 when the need for more permanent staffing was discussed.[82]

In 1910 West Wallsend was declared fortunate not to have suffered an outbreak of diphtheria or typhoid due to the drainage from the houses being "allowed to run out into the streets".[83] Presumably this problem was gradually overcome, although piped sewerage was not extended to West Wallsend until the 1950s and Holmesville in the 1960s. In fact, in 1955 tenders to run for three years were still being invited by Lake Macquarie Shire Council for "the removal and disposal of nightsoil from the townships of West Wallsend, Holmesville, Barnsley, Killingworth …".[84] Electricity began to arrive in 1923 but not until the 1940s did all night lighting arrive.[85]

Industry

Coal mining was the predominate industry associated with the West Wallsend/Holmesville district.[86] However at various times some local industries have operated, most notable brickyards to supply material for houses and collieries, and timber getting to also provide construction material but more importantly timber props for the mines.

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[77] Price, *Holmesville*, p.78.
[78] Price, *Holmesville*, pp.44-45.
[79] *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wednesday 15 January 1902, p.10 & Price, *Holmesville*, p.87.
[80] Lake Macquarie City Council, *Archaeological Monitoring of Historic Well*, p.5.
[81] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.104, also *Book 3*, p.41 & Price, *Holmesville*, pp.75-76.
[82] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 13 February 1952, p.4.
[83] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 14 April 1910, p.5.
[84] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 22 September 1954, p.15.
[85] Price, *Holmesville*, pp.74-75.
[86] See Coal Mining.

Brickyards included the Frith family brickworks in Holmesville whose bricks were identified in the Wilson St well study and the Reynolds brickyard located on the road to the West Wallsend cemetery.[87]

The original advertisements for the West Wallsend Coal Company referred to the plentiful timber and this was brought to the mine sites by bullock by families such as the O'Donnells who had farmed land between West Wallsend and the Sugarloaf escarpment since the 1860s. A local saw-mill cut the timber for both the mine and local houses.[88]

In 1948 the Co-operative Wholesale Society established a clothing factory in West Wallsend.[89]

Labour

With the coal mines for long the dominant employer of the communities, the labour practices of coal mines, miners and associated workers, including the role of unions, strikes and unemployment, are of great significance.

In fact, the beginning of labour history in West Wallsend appears to have begun in 1888 along with West Wallsend itself with a strike. The owners of the new West Wallsend Colliery were associated with those of other coal mines who were attempting to break an 1872 agreement that linked the payment of miners to a sliding scale based on the price of coal. The result was that just as the new West Wallsend mine was opened a strike commenced. This strike involved bringing in strike breakers from Sydney who were for a time housed in huts on Wilson St that were known as Scab Row. Police and military protection, including even a machine gun, was involved but the final result was a return to work on the pre-strike conditions.[90] Although some disturbances occurred at other mines, there was no trouble at West Wallsend and as many of the "blacklegs" had been signed up on false pretences and were navvies rather than miners, many left without doing any work.[91]

That of 1888 was a general dispute that involved many mines, but within a year the West Wallsend Colliery was in dispute with its own miners alone over the "price for yardwork". The "Miner's Delegate Board" (union) offered a new system of independent arbitration in October 1889 that was rejected by the company and as the dispute dragged on the "infant town" of West Wallsend languished. The strike finally ended in early 1890 after 29 weeks.[92]

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[87] Lake Macquarie City Council, *Archaeological Monitoring of Historic Well*, p.5; *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.41 & Price, *Holmesville*, p.49.

[88] Rees, *Our Lady of Good Counsel*, p.6 & *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.48.

[89] Hampton, *Retail Co-operatives in the Lower Hunter Valley*, p.47.

[90] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 28 September 1888, p.5, Thursday 4 October 1888, p.5 & *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.74.

[91] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 4 October 1888, p.5.

[92] *Evening News*, Tuesday 1 October 1889, p.5 & *Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday 30 January 1890, p.7.

These were not the last strikes nor the last time non-union workers would be used. In 1895, a report of a court case gives a vivid picture of both relations between union and non-union workers and of the degree of solidarity union members would demonstrate:

> At Newcastle, on March 6 two Seaham Colliery miners named Thomas Hoare and Alexander M'Donald were charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm on Henry O'Brien. There was a second count against the accused of common assault. O'Brien deposed that he and his mate (Anderson) were non-unionist miners at the Seaham Colliery, and that accused and about 100 other strikers met them in the bush near West Wallsend, and seriously assaulted them, and burned their swags. Both accused swore that they were attending a miners' meeting at West Wallsend when the alleged assault took place, and their testimony was supported by a number of witnesses who were at the meeting. Both the accused were acquitted.[93]

The Thomas Hoare mentioned is very likely Thomas 'Bondy' Hoare who ran as a Senate candidate for the Socialist Labor Party and was elected President of the Northern Branch of the Miners Federation in 1922. On that occasion he was presented at a gathering held in the Oddfellows Hall with a framed photograph of the members of the Socialist Labor Party of West Wallsend, which included himself and Dave McNeill, a councillor of the Federation and long time secretary of the West Wallsend Branch of the Socialist Labor Party. The toast was "Success to the revolutionary socialist movement".[94]

In 1910 an account of another strike refers to "co-operative mines" as a "thorn in the side of the West Wallsend people" and also reveals how the West Wallsend Brass Band took the opportunity to make a tour of Queensland "while the strike lasts". That the miners and associated workers could continue a strike for any period was due in part to what was called a "district commissary committee", which kept in touch with "any cases of distress" and assisted through what must have been a well maintained fund. Money was not handed out for the asking however, with investigations made at every sitting of the committee; a task described at times as "very unpleasant".[95]

The commissary committee was elected by the various miner's lodges and not only provided cash to those in need but collected and distributed goods in kind (some from as far a Wyong). During the strike of 1909-10 the West Wallsend Co-operative provided a four-room dwelling as a commissary depot. This was not the limit of the support and inter-connection between the striking miners and their community. The miners lodges also issued "promissory notes" and the Co-operative Store not only agreed to provide goods to their value but at a meeting of shareholders it was agreed (with some dissent) to suspend payment of dividends so that sufficient capital would be available to continue meeting the needs of the striking miners.[96]

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[93] *Australian Town and Country Journal*, Saturday 16 March 1895, p.18.
[94] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Monday 14 August 1922, p.5.
[95] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 11 January 1910, p.3.
[96] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 14 December 1909, p.6.

While 'miners' naturally predominate, in fact a coal mine operating with little or no mechanisation employed a large range of workers in addition to those who were actual miners at perhaps a ratio of one support worker for every two miners in 1900.[97] This ranged from the mine manager to under-managers, overmen, firemen, surface men, colliers, workmen, wheelers, trappers, set riders, furnacemen, engineers, banksmen, onsetters, brakesmen and drivers.[98] Wheelers for example, handled the carts that moved the coal to the surface, while trappers controlled the doors that were required to maintain air within the mines, others of course worked on the surface, including those running the trains that took the coal onto Newcastle.

The presence of the mines so close to housing meant their impact on the town was easily felt. The steam driven pit whistles, for example, were used to signal not only working times but also whether work was needed that day or the next; a long whistle meant there would be pay, a short whistle meant there would be nothing.[99]

Topmen at West Wallsend, 1898

[97] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Wednesday 3 October 1900, p.3, reports 262 miners and 120 'men and boys working around the pit'.
[98] *West Wallsend Colliery, West Wallsend. Special Rules.*
[99] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.71.

Working conditions naturally varied over time with increased mechanisation transforming much of the work entirely. A glimpse of general conditions at the beginning of the 20th century is found in a mine-by-mine description. From West Wallsend Colliery:

> On the Thursday night of pay-week, each man is given a pay slip with his number, name, and amount owing written on it, which he brings already signed on the following day, and gives in exchange for his money. The pay for each man is counted out beforehand and placed in a tin cup kept on a rack properly numbered. In this way there is no delay when paying a number of men.[100]

And from the West Wallsend-Killingworth Colliery:

> The number on a miner's token varies with the place where he is working, but the number on his lamp is always the same, and a token is hung up on a peg when his lamp is taken below. In this way the management can ascertain how many and what men are at work, and where they are employed.[101]

A mine worker himself recalls:

> We'd ride our bikes home after work – five or six miles – have tea, perhaps have a couple of pints of beer, and you'd be so tired by seven o'clock, you'd go home and go to bed to be up at five the next morning.[102]

Such conditions as mine workers had was often hard fought for. In 1916, for example, miners won the right of "Bank to Bank" – meaning they were paid from the time they began to go underground rather than only when they arrived at the coal face.[103] Again in 1925-26 a lamp strike was necessary as the men wanted to use the safer electricity and refused kerosene lamps after a lamp cabin fire destroyed their own lamps.[104]

The most severe blow came with the widespread mine lockout in 1929 after workers refused a proposed pay cut. The infamous Rothbury Riot occurred at this time and no doubt miners from West Wallsend were involved in what began as a protest against the use of non-union labour and ended in a death.[105] With the Great Depression underway this was a struggle the miners lost and by 1932 it was reported that only 90 men were in employment in West Wallsend out of a population of 4,000.[106]

The 1930s were therefore years of dole work and in 1935 men working for the dole often did road works both locally and on projects away from home. These "dollies" locally built a road up Mount Sugarloaf, well as the kerb and guttering

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[100] Danvers Power, *Coalfields & Collieries of Australia*, pp.281-282.
[101] Danvers Power, *Coalfields & Collieries of Australia*, p.283.
[102] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.96.
[103] Reynolds, *Early West Wallsend*, p.234.
[104] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.75.
[105] Rees, *Our Lady of Good Counsel*, p.8.
[106] *Sydney Morning Herald*, Friday 22 July 1932, p.9.

along Withers St, which was known as the "Golden Mile". This stretch of unemployment relief work went originally from the shops on Withers St down to Salty Creek, but now only exists in a short stretch from South St to Powell St, the rest possibly destroyed when the road was tarred in the 1960s. Due to the poor effectiveness of the drain, this section was dug up and new pipe laid underneath and the stone kerbing reconstructed in 1999.[107]

With its high unemployment – some referred to West Wallsend at this time as West 'Worldsend' – the community was also a center for the Unemployed Workers Union. This organisation had representatives of the State Labour Exchanges set up during the depression, one of which seemed to have been located in Holmesville. In 1935 relief workers met on the Holmesville cricket ground and struck over solider preference.[108] In the same year some 600 men, led by a brass band, marched eight miles from West Wallsend to Speers Point to protest to the Lake Macquarie Shire Council about their relief work conditions.[109] The strike by unemployed men had widespread local support at a public meeting held in the Newcastle Town Hall and included demands that relief work to be paid at award rates.[110]

These demands by unemployed men in the 1930s were supported by the Miners Federation and this was a continuation of the long history of union activity within the West Wallsend/Holmesville communities that went beyond strikes. This was based on a system of miners lodges to which all workers at a mine belonged. Despite this history, relatively little is now known in detail of the activities of the lodges in the life of the communities. Glimpses can be seen, such as when the dues to the lodges were paid each "Pay Saturday" at stumps in the pit paddock or later in stump huts (to pay union dues was called to "pay his stump").[111] Or of an account of a lodge meeting held at Presland Hall in 1891 discussing the unfair dismissal of a worker, or when the "Yearly Fund" associated with the Seaham Colliery was wound up with a supper at "Watson's lodge room", including singing, recitations and toasts to the King.[112] During strikes the miners lodges organised "commissary committees" to assist those in special need.[113] And the May Day marches in the 1920s were subsidised by the miner's lodges.[114]

Despite the long history of mining associated with the communities the only memorial to miners as such is the Sugarloaf Colliery sign erected on the corner of the Public School, which includes a list of miners killed in accidents.

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[107] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.5; Rees, *Our Lady of Good Counsel*, p.8 & Stuart, *A Heritage Assessment of Stone Kerb and Guttering*, p.1.
[108] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, Book 2, p.80-81.
[109] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 12 July 1935, p.11.
[110] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 3 August 1935, pp.9-10.
[111] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 5 September 1891, p.7 & *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 3*, p.7 & *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 5 January 1893, p.5.
[112] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 26 May 1915, p.11.
[113] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 14 December 1909, p.6.
[114] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.94.

Women

Due to the nature of both sources and of the historical period covered women are greatly underrepresented and even when they are mentioned it is usually as a Mrs followed by both her husbands initial and family name. It should be noted that throughout most of the period from the establishment of West Wallsend until the 1970s women provided almost all the fund raising efforts behind the many social events and community activities that occurred. The main committees that ran community organisations were usually men only, while a women's sub-committee organised the fundraising. This was the case for the Holmesville School of Arts in which "a separate and solid committee" of at least Mrs Waller, Mrs Holmes and Mrs Rufford was acknowledge to run the bazaars and other fund raising activities.[115]

The women who baked the food and organised the sales that brought in the funds in the years before government funding that ran all but the commercial enterprises within communities such as West Wallsend, Holmesville and others remain largely anonymous. However, many others do appear from time to time in the sources and are worth a special mention to help counter the imbalance in our information. Thus there was Mrs J Wilson, licensee of the Northumberland Hotel who often provided the Federal Hall free of charge. (Women as licensees were relatively common and Mrs Wilson was not being a soft-heart women in failing to charge but a shrewd businessperson in ensuring large numbers of potential customers attended next door to her hotel). Mrs J. Riches is another we know of who was especially honoured for her charitable work, and while this was a typical women's role she must have been especially generous with either her money or her time to rate this.[116]

One women whose full name is known was Nurse Ellen Jane Torrance who owned and ran the "Glen Ayr" Private Hospital on Appletree Road, between West Wallsend and Holmesville. For 24 years Nurse Torrance worked in West Wallsend, including service in the "N.E.S. Emergency Hospital" at West Wallsend (a kind of First Aid Station in case of attack). Ellen Torrance died in 1950 aged only 57.[117]

The women of the West Wallsend Co-operative Women's Guild worked to raise money for many selected causes, such as the Wallsend Hospital. Another group of unnamed women are the 100 or so who accompanied those who marched to Speers Point, including one who addressed the Lake Macquarie Shire Council, and another 25 who attended the public meeting in Newcastle as part of the strike by the unemployed against the conditions of relief being imposed on their husbands, brothers and fathers.[118] While women did not generally receive relief, there were women who were recognised as unemployed and special

[115] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 9 October 1915, p.6.
[116] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 28 August 1906, p.3.
[117] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 19 July 1950, p.6.
[118] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Friday 12 July 1935, pp.11-12 & Saturday 3 August 1935, pp.9-10.

representations were made concerning the "unemployed women and girls at West Wallsend" by the local MLA George Booth.[119]

The Miners Federation at least was anxious give women a larger place and Miners Women's axillaries became common from the 1930s, with that of West Wallsend organised during a strike in 1938.[120] In 1954 a conference of these axillaries was held in West Wallsend at which was discussed such local matters as the need for a community hall at West Wallsend, and repairs to both the Barnsley Public School and to the Federal Hall, as well as wider issues such as unemployment and the selection of delegates to a national women's conference to be held in Sydney.[121]

Commerce

The small size of West Wallsend, Holmesville and associated settlements as well as their proximity to larger centres such as Newcastle limited the range of commercial enterprises. The outstanding exception to this was the early founding and long-life of the West Wallsend Co-operative Society.

The West Wallsend Co-Operative Society was founded in 1891 by workers who were residents of West Wallsend. The first meeting was held in William Harden's home and the West Wallsend Co-operative Society Ltd was formed with 22 shareholders.[122] It first operated from a small wooden shop, which still stands opposite the Post Office and was later a doctor's surgery, until new premises were built in 1893. At this stage the co-operative had 82 members, a profit of over £600 and was paying dividends.[123] The new premises were enlarged in 1895 and a new two-story building was built in 1906.[124]

The second store of the West Wallsend Co-operative in 1891

[119] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 4 January 1933, p.4.
[120] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 24 September 1938, p.8.
[121] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 3 August 1954, p.4.
[122] Reynolds, *Early West Wallsend*, pp.210-214.
[123] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Tuesday 11 July 1893, p.6.
[124] Suters, Doring, Turner, *City of Lake Macquarie Heritage Study – West Wallsend,* WW-26.

Known also as "The People's Hive", in the 1890s, weekly deliveries were begun to Minmi and Holmesville. Around 1900 the co-op had 1,044 members when the district around West Wallsend had a population of 6,000. In 1910 a report declared the West Wallsend Co-operative to be "the largest co-operative store in New South Wales".[125] It often paid dividends as high as two shillings in the pound and in 1927 could claim that 70% of local demand was supplied by the store.[126] The West Wallsend Co-operative met this demand in part with its numerous delivery carts and its large stable of horses. It also had a bakehouse by 1900, which only converted its wood fired ovens to oil in 1951.[127] Even after the closure of the West Wallsend Colliery in 1923 and the decline of West Wallsend's population the West Wallsend Co-operative continued to grow. It did this by establishing branches in Belmont and Swansea until by the 1960s it had more members in these areas than in West Wallsend.[128]

Despite its size, the West Wallsend Co-operative continued to run as an independent local co-operative only until 1964, after which it was absorbed into the Newcastle and Suburban Co-operative Society Limited.[129] In this period the delivery service and time for orders to be filled was felt to have deteriorated. However, known as 'The Store', it remained the dominant commercial centre of West Wallsend/Holmesville district and the six month dividends are fondly remembered.[130] The West Wallsend branch of this enterprise continued to dominate the commercial district of West Wallsend into the 1970s. So much so that a report stated in 1972 that:

> The department store, Newcastle & Suburban Co-op Store, is the main commercial activity but is also a major cause of the lack of new business in the centre. In a middle to low income area such as West Wallsend, with an unusually high proportion of old people and pensioners, "The Store" offers credit and finance facilities with traditional connections with local families which make competition particularly difficult.[131]

While this dominance was no doubt true of the 1970s it should not be forgotten that in an earlier period many small shops were often run inside houses or sheds, coming and going, with little permanent record.[132] In addition both West Wallsend and Holmesville did have a number of stores, including more shops down Withers Street at one point, that competed for a time with the West Wallsend Co-operative or which provided specialist services.

One such was the Holmesville General Store, at the corner of Charlotte and George Street. There was also a bakehouse on George Street in 1909.[133] In West Wallsend itself an early competitor of the Co-op was established by one of its

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[125] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 14 April 1910, p.5.
[126] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.44.
[127] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, pp.47-48.
[128] Hampton, *Retail Co-operatives in the Lower Hunter Valley*, p.30.
[129] Hampton, *Retail Co-operatives in the Lower Hunter Valley*, p.30.
[130] West Wallsend Community Historical Society, 9/4/2014.
[131] *Cardiff, West Wallsend Planning District*, p.LS687.
[132] Price, *Holmesville*, p.48.
[133] Price, *Holmesville*, p.48, also see map of Holmesville shops, p.60.

former mangers, Edward Stobbs, who in 1896 set up a store at 69 Carrington St. In 1908 this store was purchased by Thomas Vaisey, then in 1916 it was Wylie's store until 1947, by which time West Wallsend was half its 1920 population and the last of the four mines had closed. The store at this time was taken over by the West Wallsend Co-op and used by the Co-operative Wholesale Society and the Co-operative Women's Guild as a clothing factory.[134] After it was sold in 1960 it was used by a variety of commercial operations – butcher, hairdresser, liquor store.[135]

The West Wallsend/Holmesville area seems not to have been served by dedicated bank buildings but instead relied on agencies with the post office or stores. A branch of the Commonwealth Bank was established and operated throughout the Depression only to close in 1942 due to 'manpower shortages'. After that residents had a savings bank at the Post Office while businesses had to go 15 miles to Newcastle.[136]

Technology

Mining technology naturally predominates within the communities and it is reputed that Joseph Holmes contributed a mining innovation related to 'top holing'.[137] Though it is not clear now what this was.

West Wallsend Colliery is also said to have been the first to have an iron poppet head. The top of this structure was moved to the Freeman's Gap mining museum in the 1970s but both top and bottom have been restored and is now at the Newcastle Mines Rescue Station at Argenton.[138]

Government and administration

The first suggestion of local governance was as early as 1889 when the West Wallsend Improvement Committee was already underway and requesting a letter box.[139] By at least 1900 a Holmesville "Improvement Committee" was also meeting to discuss and request improvements such as a letter box from the Postmaster-General, a railway station and a metalled road to West Wallsend.[140] In 1905 the "Holmesville Progress Committee" was also requesting a public school among other improvements.[141] Soon after this, in 1906, the Lake Macquarie Shire was formed, though this did not prevent discussion of a West Wallsend Municipality in 1907.[142] However it was not until around 1916 that

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[134] Hampton, *Retail Co-operatives in the Lower Hunter Valley*, p.47.
[135] EJE Heritage, *Ice Box Liquor, 69 Carrington St*, pp.8-9 & p.14.
[136] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 14 April 1942, p.5 & Monday 30 October 1944, p.5.
[137] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.12.
[138] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.11 & Anne Andrews, 9/4/2014.
[139] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate,* Thursday 12 December 1889, p.6.
[140] Price, *Holmesville*, p.46.
[141] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Friday 27 October 1905, p.6.
[142] *Sydney Morning Herald*, Friday 8 February 1907, p,8.

West Wallsend was declared an "urban area" under the Local Government Act and rates imposed.[143]

In 1945 the Holmesville Progress Association was formed (reformed?) to work with the Lake Macquarie Council and the Joint Coal Board to acquire facilities such as tennis courts, sports ovals, etc.[144] In the 1950s the affairs of West Wallsend were being handled by the West Wallsend Progress and Amenities Committee, which in 1954 received £900 to help light tennis courts and provide a clubhouse.[145]

While the working together of local government and community groups is not unusual, the West Wallsend/Holmesville communities, due to their links with coal mining, had the added input for many years of the Joint Coal Board. One of the aims of this instrumentality was to fund improvements in coal mining communities and this it did in a variety of ways such as when in 1949 it spent £22,341 in West Wallsend on projects ranging from road works to collieries, work on West Wallsend Park, a ladies' rest room at the School of Arts, new instruments for the West Wallsend Band, fares to Sydney and Ipswich for band contests, a projector for the public school, and support for an arts and crafts exhibition.[146] In 1953, when the new £4500 Baby Health Centre opened in West Wallsend, a representative of the Joint Coal Board was present.[147]

Both West Wallsend and Holmesville had police stations from an early period and both the original police cottages remain, as does a new West Wallsend police station built in 1949.[148] A Police Court also operated at West Wallsend, including for a time from the School of Arts, until 1940.[149]

Throughout the 1950s to the end of the 1980s West Wallsend and Holmesville remained relatively isolated. This isolation ended in the minds of many residents with the first heritage study of the communities and the proposal to declare them both general heritage conservation areas. West Wallsend formed a special heritage committee and together with the Holmesville Progress Association a community survey of attitudes to heritage resulted in the remarkable *West Wallsend Heritage Committee Report to Council*. The community consensus from this document was that any blanket imposition of heritage listing on property owners was to be rejected. Despite this the general idea of heritage listing was in fact accepted by the majority of those whose properties were likely to be listed (20 out of 28 in West Wallsend), while the Holmesville Progress Association seemed willing to make judgements in opposition to individual owners. The

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[143] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 22 January 1920, p.5.
[144] Price, *Holmesville*, p.93.
[145] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 7 December 1954, p.5.
[146] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Monday 11 July 1949, p.3.
[147] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 10 November 1953, p.4.
[148] Suters, Doring, Turner, *City of Lake Macquarie Heritage Study – West Wallsend*, WW-29; Suters, Doring, Turner, *City of Lake Macquarie Heritage Study – Holmesville*, HV-08 & *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 10 November 1949, p.4.
[149] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 27 June 1940, p.6.

document provides an interesting snapshot of community attitudes in the 1990s.[150]

On a broader political level the West Wallsend/Holmesville communities have been supporters of working class political parties that included not only the Australian Labor Party but also the Australian Socialist League (ASL), later the Socialist Labor Party, and other left-wing movements. The ASL had a West Wallsend branch in 1901 (seemingly its only one on the coalfields) at which addresses were made to the 'wage-slaves of Westy'.[151] In 1904, the West Wallsend branch of the ASL was meeting monthly in the School of Arts and later at Smith's Hotel (Clyde Inn).[152]

Defence

That two settlements related to West Wallsend – Ladysmith & Mafeking – were named after Boer War battles implies a connection perhaps with returning veterans, but this is not clear. That support for such imperial conflicts was not universal at West Wallsend is revealed in an account in 1900 of a street confrontation between a "Britisher" and another variously described as a "labourer leaguer" and a "miner".[153]

A more certain link with defence is the passing of the recruitment march - the Wallabies – through the district in January 1916 when they made camp at Gregory Park (then West Wallsend Park).[154] The West Wallsend School of Arts and the Holmesville Community Hall were both the sites of many "Welcome Homes" for returning soldiers during the war. Those coming home to West Wallsend were reputedly collected by James Johnston, undertaker, in his Ford.[155]

The smaller settlements of the district also participated in the fundraising that was such a prominent aspect of Australia's involvement in the First World War. Such as when the Killingworth Girls League raised £11 17s 5d for a returned soldiers fund by organising an event in the "Institute Hall" with music, songs, a sweet stall and lottery. The event was attended by "visitors from Holmesville, Barnsley, and Wakefield".[156]

A Drill Hall is mentioned in West Wallsend as early as 1916 and referred to again as in use for military and community purposed right through until the 1940s.[157] However, apart from being on Withers St, it is not clear where this building was.

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[150] *West Wallsend Heritage Committee Report to Council*

[151] *People*, Saturday 14 September 1901, p.4; Saturday 17 May 1902, p.4 & Laffan, *Good Work at Westy – The Socialist Labor Party on the Northern Coalfields 1901-1922*, p.5.

[152] *People*, Saturday 27 February 1904, p.4 & Saturday 27 May 1911, p.1.

[153] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate,* Monday 26 February 1900, p.4.

[154] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 3*, p.40.

[155] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.22 & Price, *Holmesville*, p.105.

[156] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 18 July 1916, p.3.

[157] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 17 October 1916, p.5 & Saturday 15 March 1941, p.6.

In 1922 the West Wallsend War memorial was erected with another Girls' League among others contributing to fundraising.[158] Many community organisation such as the Holmesville Community Hall, most of the churches and the School of Arts have a roll of honour board for those who participated.[159]

In the 1920s and 1930s West Wallsend formed A Company of the 35th Battalion.[160] And during the Second World War a rifle range was established near the cemetery and another closer to Killingworth, as well as a military camp for jungle warfare training near the West Wallsend colliery dam.[161]

Housing

Both West Wallsend and Holmesville are the result of planned subdivisions, the one from coal company land and the other from private land. In each case the lots were bought largely by mine worker's families who then contracted to erect a house on the lot. The general result of this is that most of the oldest homes are simple steep-roofed miners' cottages.

Two of these houses, both close to the West Wallsend Hotel, were advertised for sale in 1892. One was described as a three-roomed weather board house, "lined and coiled and newly painted" with a verandah back and front and an 800 gallon iron tank. This was priced at £125. The second was a two-roomed weather board house with a detached kitchen, also "lined and coiled", and also newly painted with a 750 gallon iron tank. This was for sale at £115. Both were on the standard West Wallsend allotment of "33ft by 165ft" and both were "well fenced".[162]

Despite the planned subdivisions many houses seem not to be set to any standard alignment. This may be due to the habit of moving a house (by bullock) when moving jobs. Miners from Minmi, for example, where the house but not the land was owned by them, often moved and in doing so may have set up varying alignments.[163] In 1920 it was reported that some 100 houses in Holmesville were removed as their owners left the area at a time of high unemployment.[164] A similar number was also said to have been removed from West Wallsend during the Depression.[165]

Scattered here and there among the potentially movable wooden houses in both communities are more substantial homes in brick constructed presumably by professionals and successful tradesmen, or by such established families as the Fairleys and the Holmes.[166] Additionally, numerous substantial houses in wood were also built in the years after WWI at a time of prosperity.

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158 *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.56.
159 Price, *Holmesville*, p.105 & West Wallsend Community Historical Society, 9/4/2014.
160 *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.30.
161 Anne Andrews & Leah Buchanan, 9/4/2014.
162 *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 13 February 1892, p.8.
163 West Wallsend Community Historical Society, 9/4/2014.
164 *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 25 August 1920, p.6.
165 *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 29 December 1938, p.4.
166 Anne Andrews, 9/4/2014.

Service buildings such as hotels and the co-operative store were built on a much grander scale in the late 19th or early 20th century when West Wallsend and district was at its height and the subsequent decline has helped preserve most as there has been little incentive to replace or modernize until recent times. The most obvious exception to this being the West Wallsend Workers Club erected in the late 1950s and extended in the 1960s.

While few service buildings were erected after the mines closed, many later homes were built, also on a modest scale during the inter-war and post-war periods as the population gradually rose again or older homes were replaced. In the 1950s the Housing Commission planned to build over 100 homes in West Wallsend.[167] While it is not clear if all this number was built, certainly some were. At the time the coal mines were suffering a labour shortage and the link between providing housing and attracting miners was a consideration. In 1954 it was reported that 10 building sites for the erection of "economy homes" had been resumed in West Wallsend.[168]

The first double storey development in West Wallsend took place around the Museum Hotel in the 1990s. That such construction was so late in coming to the area was partly due to the need for approval from the Mine Subsidence Board. In fact, the release of land by Coal & Allied that by then owned the land surrounding the West Wallsend/Holmesville settlements was the first in years.[169] The result of this new land has been the recent planning of new residential settlements close to, but separate from, those already established. The exception to this has been Esteville now swallowed up in the much larger Cameron Park.

Social institutions

The two communities of West Wallsend and Holmesville had the usual range of social institutions typical of the times. Holmesville in general strove to mirror those of West Wallsend, even if on a smaller scale, rather than participating in any joint institutions. A special feature of some of these social institutions was the support many began to receive from the Joint Coal Board in the post-war period, just as in the earlier period the coal companies had donated land.

While the miners lodges were undoubtedly the first social institutions (see Labour), another early institution was Presland Hall in which the first concert to be held in West Wallsend took place in mid-1889.[170] Community halls such as that of Charles Presland, who was licensee of the West Wallsend Hotel at this time, were at first privately owned and often associated with hotels. They were significant venues for a variety of activities of a social nature, including fund raising (the first concert was to raise funds for the as yet unbuilt Presbyterian Church). Presland Hall became Sharpe's Hall when the licensee changed and here

[167] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Monday 10 December 1951, p. 1.
[168] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 29 May 1954, p.3.
[169] *Community News*, Tuesday 18 November 1992, p.6 & p.1.
[170] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 22 June 1889, p.6.

meetings of the miners of West Wallsend Lodge and the Church of England services were held (though not at the same time).[171]

Other hotels in West Wallsend also had their associated halls, such as the Museum Hotel – Museum/Johnson's Hall, and the Northumberland Hotel – Federal Hall. Early in the 20th century the Federal Hall was a popular venue for a variety of social gatherings such as a "complimentary concert" given to Mrs J. Riches on her departure as thanks for her "unostentatious assistance in any charitable cause which came before her". Around the same time a benefit concert in aid of Mr James Grills who had been "unable for, some time to follow his employment" due to sickness was held by the Seaham Miners Lodge and the Free Gardeners' Lodge in the Federal Hall. In both cases the licensee of the associated Northumberland Hotel, Mrs T. Watson, was thanked for providing the hall free of charge. It is unclear if the Royal Hotel had a similar venue but when the "gentlemen" of the post office staff wished to send off former Post Master Mr. F. J. Coulter they did so here at what was described as a "smoke concert".[172]

The West Wallsend School of Arts was founded in the late 1890s and its building's foundation stone laid in 1901 with money in part raised by activities held in Presland Hall. The West Wallsend Coal Company under its Manager Duncan McGeachie provided the land for the School of Arts.[173] Like most Schools of Art the building was used for a variety of purposes such as a library, community meetings, balls, Welcome Homes and fetes. In 1905 for example the Salvation Army held its junior annual at the West Wallsend School of Arts.[174]

The Masonic Lodge St. Andrew's was founded March 1891. At first meetings were held in the Northumberland Hotel, then the Museum Hotel until a Temple was built in 1909 and extended in 1923. Known as the "butterbox", dances were held there for many years.[175] It ceased operating as a Masonic Hall sometime before 2006 and was purchased privately the following year.[176] Another venue for social gatherings such as dances and meetings was Johnston's Hall, later called the Museum Hall, which was built behind the Museum Hotel. This hall was demolished in the 1960's.[177]

Less well known but actually pre-dating the Masons in their Scottish origins was the Free Gardeners' Lodge. It was a friendly society and so members provided mutual support to themselves and their families and were prominent at the funerals of members where their own service was read.[178] There were many such societies in the West Wallsend/Holmesville area and in 1913 the Free Gardeners' Lodge convened a meeting of all such societies in the community. They met in "Watson's Lodge-room" (Federal Hall) to discuss the issue of

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[171] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 24 September 1891, p.6; Friday 27 September 1895, p.3; Thursday 5 January 1893, p.5 & Thursday 27 April 1893, p.3.
[172] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 28 August 1906, p.3.
[173] Reynolds, *Early West Wallsend*, pp.186-187.
[174] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Saturday 23 December 1905, p.3.
[175] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.31.
[176] Cox, *Heritage Assessment for 45 Brown St, West Wallsend*, p.21.
[177] Reynolds, *Early West Wallsend*, pp.72-73.
[178] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 2 November 1933, p.14.

members who would build up arrears despite having accessed funds when sick and then joined another society. The meeting proposed that each society form a committee to investigate such cases. In addition to the Free Gardeners, representatives from the G.U.O. Oddfellows, the Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity Oddfellows and the Independent Order of Rechabites were present. An 'Oddfellows Hall' was proposed at this meeting and stood at the corner of Wilson and Withers Street.[179]

West Wallsend also had its Loyal Orange Lodge (L.O.L. No.156), which in 1906 held its annual ball in the School of Arts. Though the supper was held in the 'lodgeroom'.[180]

In the 1930s unemployed men collected their dole money from police located at the School of Arts, which also served as the court house for a time.[181] But by 1935 it seems the School of Arts was inactive until it was used in 1946 by the Miners Lodges to establish a Workers Club. This was opened in 1948 at the rear of the School of Arts in part with a loan from the Miners Federation. In 1952 the committee asked the Lake Macquarie Shire Council to take over the building and the Workers Club moved to separate premises in 1954.[182]

The Workers Club in West Wallsend became the major social institution of the community. In 1954 it allowed women be members and in 1956 women were allowed to run for committee, though it was not until 1995 that the first women was elected to the committee. The original membership was 120, raised to 450 in 1953. In 1956 the first paid entertainers appeared at the West Wallsend Workers Club and since then the Bee Gees (when the twins were 12 years old) and an early Kamahl have performed there.[183]

The West Wallsend RSL also had its own hall for a time, and this is now the Scout Hall.[184]

In Holmesville a variety of community venues seems to have been established, including a School of Arts. First established in a house in St Helen's Street, in 1911 it opened its own building with donations by Joseph Holmes, and in a building erected by Joseph's son William Holmes. The Holmesville School of Arts contained a reading room and lecture rooms, and in 1907 "moving pictures by the electric bioscope" were shown there. By the 1950s it had ceased activity and the building was sold.[185]

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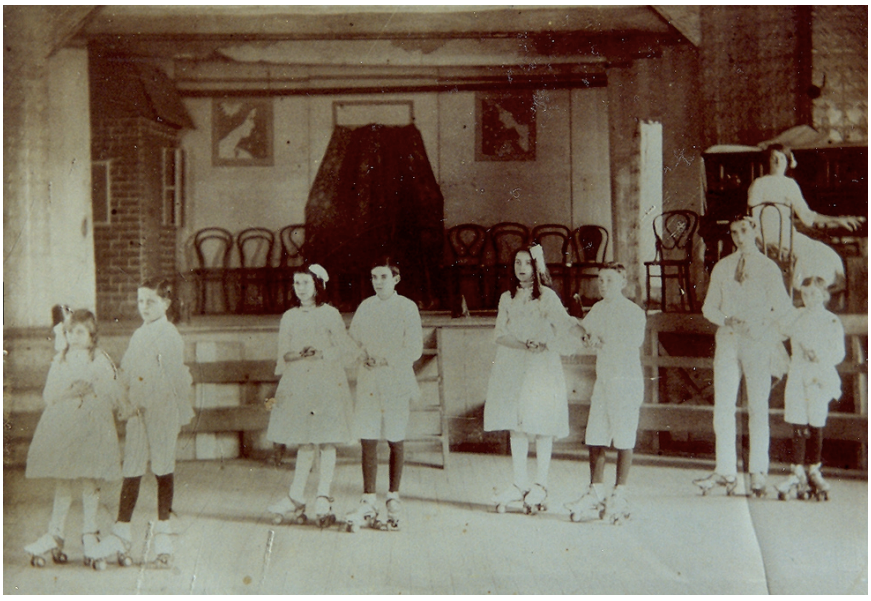
[179] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 19 September 1913, p.7. Location supplied by Lillian Price, West Wallsend District Heritage Group, 30/4/2014.
[180] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 10 July 1906, p.6.
[181] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.36.
[182] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 21 November 1952, p.4 & *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.83.
[183] *West Wallsend Workers Club*, p.4-7.
[184] West Wallsend Community Historical Society, 9/4/2012.
[185] Price, *Holmesville*, p.89 & *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 9 October 1915, p.6.

A community hall at Holmesville was built in 1906 by Simeon Hartland and called Hartland Hall for many years. Used for a variety of community events including skating, dances, frolics, Welcome Homes and weddings, it was privately owned until 1934 when its was bought by Strand Pictures. In 1948 it was bought by the Joint Coal Board for the community and managed by the Holmesville Progress Association for community events and classes. Ownership was transferred to Lake Macquarie Shire in 1952.[186]

Although Holmesville was denied a Public School, the people of Barnsley, which did have a school, seem to also need to use Hartland Hall at Holmesville for their events. Or at least this is what the Barnsley Parents and Citizens Association did in 1934 when it held a baby show and cooking competition.[187] Which is not to say Barnsley did not have a public hall, for it was there in 1937 that a meeting of the "Barnsley, Killingworth, and Wakefield unemployed and relief workers" rejected as unsuitable an issue from the government of clothes and boots as "rotten and filthy".[188]

An Ambulance Hall was built in Holmesville in 1936 and was used for First Aid Classes and later by the Progress Association. It was moved in 1958 beside the Community Hall (formerly Hartlands) to become the supper room.[189]

West Wallsend High School & Community Museum was set up in 1985 by the school and is rare in being located in the school grounds. The school and students themselves set up the museum and catalogued the collection until the teacher most enthusiastic in supporting this initiative was transferred. The museum closed for at time until a community group took over and it now runs as a community based historical society.[190]



Children roller skating at Hartland Hall, Holmesville, 1912.

[186] Price, *Holmesville*, p.42, p.54 & pp.88-89.
[187] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 17 August 1934, p.13.
[188] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Monday 15 February 1937, p.3.
[189] Price, *Holmesville*, pp.72-73.
[190] West Wallsend Community Historical Society, 9/4/2012.

Leisure

A wide variety of leisure activities have been indulged in by the communities of West Wallsend and Holmesville. Hotels were built early to provide places to have a drink and socialise after long days in the mines, and venues for dancing, the cinema and other indoor social activities were soon established. Outdoor activities such as swimming and picnic spots were popular, and coursing, later dog racing (one course was on Fairly Rd), fishing and tennis were also popular. A variety of brass bands, several of them highly successful in competitions, also provided leisure activities for many, as did a number of forms of gambling.

In 1887 William Johnston and family moved to West Wallsend and built the Museum Hotel, named for the taxidermy specimens of William Johnston's daughter Margaret.[191] By 1888 the West Wallsend Hotel had been added, and by 1897 West Wallsend was reported to have five hotels (adding perhaps the Clyde Inn, Royal and Northumberland Hotels) and these were favoured by the miners as places to "divide their pay".[192] (Miners were sometimes paid in groups and they also required change.[193]) An application for a sixth hotel license in 1903 was refused and since then only the West Wallsend Hotel seems to have disappeared completely, possibly as early as 1908.[194] The Tattersall's Hotel in Carrington Street is also mentioned as a two-story 14-roomed hotel that was "de-licensed" in 1921.[195] The Royal Hotel was burned down in 2011.

An application for a license was granted in Holmesville in 1903 when it was described as having 98 houses and a population of 500. The following year the Holmesville Hotel was built.[196]

The Clyde Inn and Tattersall's – two of West Wallsend's five hotels by 1903.

[191] Suters, Doring, Turner, *City of Lake Macquarie Heritage Study – West Wallsend,* WW-41 & *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.12.

[192] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 26 January 1888, p.1 & Friday 3 April 1903, p.7.

[193] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Monday 25 August 1879, p.2.

[194] Based on a plaque associated with the Royal Hotel to which the licence was transferred. Information supplied by Lillian Price, West Wallsend District Heritage Group, 30/4/2014.

[195] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 3 April 1903, p.7 & Saturday 26 November 1921, p.9.

[196] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 13 January 1903, p. 7 & Price, *Holmesville*, p.51.

Dances, including square dances, were often held in the School of Arts, and on Friday nights, it was recalled, girls working at the West Wallsend Co-operative Store would finish at 6pm and then rush home to change to go to the School of Arts for the dance.[197]

The cinema came early to West Wallsend and by 1906 films were being shown at local halls and in the School of Arts. Soon after, in 1911 and 1912, two theatres had been built, one on the corner of Laidley & Carrington Streets, and another on Carrington Street. The latter was Phelan's Electric Play Theatre, which opened in 1911 as an open air picture show, although its registration by July 1912 implies it was covered by that point. This may have been why the competing cinema, Peter's and Mackey's Picture Palace, sold out to Phelan's.[198] Originally with a bare floor and a wooden section used for skating, a full wooden floor was installed by 1920. It became Lowe's and then Strand Pictures in the 1920s.[199] TV and declining numbers led to its closure in 1964, and it was mostly demolished in 1970.[200] A brick projection box from this theatre stood for many years after on the Carrington Street site; though not the original, it was built perhaps when talkies were introduced.

An outdoor cinema was also reported in Holmesville in 1911 and in the 1920's "Fisho Jack" Richardson kept a shop in Holmesville at the corner of Appletree Road and Seaham Street from where he ran a picture show.[201]

Lying as they do surrounded by open countryside and near Australia's largest salt water lake, the West Wallsend/Holmesville settlements also enjoyed many outdoor leisure activities. From the earliest period of the history of the communities this included travelling on a Sunday to what was called 'O'Donnelltown'. The O'Donnell's and their five sons were a long established family occupying a small valley to the west of West Wallsend just beneath the Mount Sugarloaf escarpment. People from Newcastle would take the train or tram to West Wallsend, and then walk to O'Donnelltown where cricket or football, horse and dog races, or bullock riding could be done.[202] Later, picnic trips up Mount Sugarloaf itself were also common and there another local family established itself to provide pies and water, as well a telescope to look through for sixpence.[203] In the 1920s, a group known as "The Scrags" would organise excursions to places even further afield.[204]

To the east of West Wallsend lay Cockle Creek or what was more commonly called Salty Creek. Here sports such as swimming and fishing were common activities. Tennis was also popular and many courts were erected in both West Wallsend and Holmesville. (See Sports below.)

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[197] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.36 & *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, Book 2, p.17.
[198] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.92.
[199] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 13 February 1915, p.3 & Hunter History Consultants, *History of the Former "Strand" Cinema*, pp.2-3.
[200] Hunter History Consultants, *History of the Former "Strand" Cinema*, p.3.
[201] Rees, *Our Lady of Good Counsel*, p.8 & Price, *Holmesville*, p.54.
[202] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.12.
[203] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, Book *2*, p.5-6.
[204] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.27.

Brass bands were popular and the West Wallsend Brass Band formed in 1898 by W. Barkell won the Australian Championship from 1904 to 1910, as well as the 8 hour demonstration March in 1904.[205] The period of the Depression also attracted people to bands, with practice at the Drill Hall on Withers Street. A West Wallsend Junior Band was formed in 1934 and a School Band was formed in 1960.[206]

A "mutual improvement society" was founded in association with the Presbyterian Church in 1906. It is not known how long this society operated but its first activity was a debate on the subject, "Would a tramway benefit West Wallsend?"[207] In 1929 the Holmesville Choral Society was established and made an appearance at various venues and gatherings in both Holmesville and West Wallsend until at least 1933.[208]

Other forms of leisure involved gambling and included coursing (in which dogs were set on rats); two-up (Three Treys was popular) in various locations and subject to police raids; and dog racing (a bicycle was used to pull the hare), at first at O'Donnelltown and later at Fairley.[209]

Sport

While the West Wallsend/Holmesville communities have enjoyed the usual range of sports, of most note is a continuous history of soccer dating from the late 19th century. In fact the West Wallsend Bluebells Soccer Club is the third oldest such club in Australia.

First formed in 1892 the West Wallsend British Football Club was based on the mainly Scottish miners who had taken up residence in West Wallsend and brought their favourite game with them. Notable in the history of the club has been their playing and beating a visiting Canadian teams; the day Canada was played all work ceased on the mines and West Wallsend was deserted.[210] The team also won the Gardiners Cup in 1921 and 1923. The most notable Bluebells player was Clarrie Coutts, who captained the Australian team.[211] While the Bluebells is the most long lived of the teams, West Wallsend also had other teams at times, such as the West Wallsend Woodpeckers.

As with most land in West Wallsend, the grounds for Johnson Park, the home of the Bluebells, was owned by the West Wallsend Coal Company. The sports ground was purchased in the 1960s with Joint Coal Board money for £350, and a

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[205] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.88 & *Back to "Westy"*, pp.19-20.
[206] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.108 & *Back to "Westy"*, pp.19-20.
[207] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 28 August 1906, p.3.
[208] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 16 July 1930, p.2 & Tuesday 4 July 1933, p.11.
[209] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 4 August 1908, p.3 & *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, Book 2, p.94-95.
[210] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, pp.84-86; *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.112 & *Back to "Westy"*, p.51.
[211] Craig, *History of the West Wallsend Bluebells Soccer Club*, n.p.

new recreation shed was erected in 1981. The Bluebells ground at West Wallsend was the site of the Annual North vs. South game from 1928 to 1959.[212]

Pryor's enclosure or grounds was where a variety of sports events seem to have taken place early in the 20th century. Such events included coursing conducted by the West Wallsend Coursing Club (rats supplied by Mr Pryor) and some forms of shooting competitions, including pigeon-shooting (live), competition for £10 trophies, and handicap shooting "under N.S.W. Gun Club's rules".[213] As Mr Whitfield Pryor was at the time the licensee of the Museum Hotel it is probable that these events took place on or near what is now Johnson Park.[214]

The West Wallsend Co-operative Society sponsored sports as well as dancing contests, in addition to other events.[215] Such events often took place in surrounding venues such as at Speers Point near Lake Macquarie. Closer to home West Wallsend Park, at first leased from the coal company and controlled by community trustees, had been established after closing a road that originally ran through the area to provide a local venue for outdoor activities. These included horse racing (or harness racing), and sometimes events that involved special trams to bring people in from as far as Newcastle. Such special events being used to raise money to help upgrade the park itself, as happened in 1911 and again in 1947.[216] West Wallsend Park was renamed Gregory Park in 1951 after William Robert Gregory an active member of the West Wallsend community.[217]

Boxing was another sport popular with miners, such as when Ern Richardson of West Wallsend and Adam Sneddon of Cessnock met in a 20 round match in 1927 at the Federal Hall next to the Northumberland Hotel. The local man won in 13 rounds.[218]

A form of cross-country running that was brought by those from Britain was "harriers". This involved one group (hares) heading off first to be chased across country by another group (hounds) in a race to a chosen spot. The West Wallsend Presbyterian Harriers held a "paper chase" in 1919 in which they ran from West Wallsend to Seahampton, Ladysmith and Holmesville and then back to West Wallsend Public School.[219]

Cycling clubs existed at both Holmesville and West Wallsend and in 1919 the West Wallsend Amateur Cycle Club held a carnival at West Wallsend Park.[220]

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[212] Craig, *History of the West Wallsend Bluebells Soccer Club*, n.p.
[213] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 26 May 1908, Saturday 4 July 1903 & Saturday 16 February 1907, p.9.
[214] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 2 October 1908, p.7.
[215] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 18 March 1925, p.9.
[216] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 4 March 1909; Thursday 15 June 1911, p.6; Friday 4 August 1911, p.6 & Friday 29 August 1947.
[217] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 1 June 1951, p.4 & Saturday 28 May 1949, p.4.
[218] *Maitland Daily Mercury*, Saturday 19 February 1927, p.11.
[219] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 15 June 1911, p.6.
[220] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 19 April 1919, p.2.

Tennis was also popular and some 23 tennis clubs existed in the 1920s, though many of these fell into disrepair during the Depression. Tennis revived along with employment and in 1948 the Joint Coal Board donated £855/10 towards the erection of tennis courts in Holmesville.

A bowls club was established in the 1950s and in 1962 the first live television broadcast of a bowls match was of one at West Wallsend.[221]

As mentioned above (see Leisure), swimming and fishing on Cockle (Salty) Creek was common. Easily accessed by tram, the West Wallsend District Life Saving Club was based on Salty Creek, while the fish were reputed to love the weeds growing near the mine pump.[222] In 1923 a swimming carnival report stated:

> Arrangements are well in hand for the swimming carnival to be held in Salty Creek on Saturday. The programme includes district school championships, all comers 50yds, and races for women boys and girls. The creek is one of the best spots in the district for the holding of such a carnival.[223]

A sport that was popular enough to field a number of teams was vigoro (also vigaro). Vigoro is an Australian sport that combines elements of cricket and baseball and is mainly played by women. It was played at the West Wallsend Public School and a number of teams from West Wallsend and Holmesville played from the 1920s until at least the 1950s.[224] The Church of England had a team (St James') and that from Holmesville was called the Holmesville Royals. Competition could be fierce with visitors in 1923 from Wallsend called the Devon-street team leaving the Holmesville ground after "refusing to accept a decision of the umpire".[225]

Health

An early doctor at West Wallsend was Dr Hocken, later Dr Renwick, after whom a street was named. These doctors were supplemented by midwives and district nurses. As early as 1918 a Baby Health Clinic was established on Carrington Street, West Wallsend and another at Barnsley, while from 1926 to 1950 Glen Ayr Private Hospital, owned by Ellen Torrance operated opposite what is now West Wallsend High School and was in a good position to service both West Wallsend and Holmesville.[226] During the Depression one doctor is reported to have worked for free until he could not longer pay his Lodge dues.[227]

In 1900 Dr Hocken was one of two doctors in West Wallsend, but it seems by agreement with the West Wallsend Colliery the miners had to go only to Dr

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[221] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, pp.42-43 & p.51 & Price, *Holmesville*, p.101.
[222] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, pp.73-75 & p.77.
[223] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 8 March 1923, p.6.
[224] Waters, *West Wallsend High School*, n.p.; Price, *Holmesville*, p.103.
[225] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Monday 16 July 1923, p.8.
[226] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, Book 2, p.82; *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.79; Price, *Holmesville – One Man's Vision*, p.53 & *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 19 July 1950, p.6.
[227] *West Wallsend Lodge St. Andrew's No.198*, Forward.

Hocken. This was an arrangement resented by the miners and eventually overthrown by a vote.[228]

Accidents associated with mining were perhaps the most obvious threat to health for these communities and an account of a 1913 conveys some of what this involved:

> P. Neilson, a wheeler, met with a painful accident yesterday, while employed at the West Wallsend Colliery. Neilson's horse knocked out two props, and about a, cwt. of the roof came away, pinning him underneath. Assistance was soon on the scene, and the dirt removed, and deputy W. J. Barrett rendered first aid. Dr. Hocken attended at the mine, and it was found that the left leg was fractured, a deep gash near the mouth, and the back of the head severely knocked. The injured lad was conveyed to the Wallsend Hospital by the West Wallsend ambulance Waggon.[229]

The Miners Lodges contributed to the Newcastle Cottage Hospital at first in preference to that at Wallsend as the road was considered better.

Typhoid was present in West Wallsend in 1905 although this was not a problem the district was especially prone to.[230]

Welfare

Welfare can take many forms and in communities where most work and live at the same jobs much of it is organised at the community level. A clear idea of how this kind of welfare operated is seen as early as 1917 when it was announced that:

> A picture show, in aid of Mr. Enoch Brennan, who has been unable to follow his occupation as a miner for the last two and a half years, was given by Mr. E. F. Phelan on Monday evening, under the auspices of the West Wallsend Relief Committee. Mr. W. Ward, on behalf of the relief committee, moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Phelan for assisting in such a needful case, which was carried by acclamation.[231]

West Wallsend Relief Committee was formed in 1893 and was still operating in 1949. It was a public body that collected donations and administered some government rations for the relief of unemployed workers and their families in the district.[232] In 1930, after the 1929 lockout, this committee declared that it would have to disband as all stores had been depleted.[233] Nevertheless the committee seems to have continued and during the Depression a soup kitchen was set up at West Wallsend School in 1931 and at Barnsley. A separate building was built for this: "The kitchen was made of saplings and corrugated iron …" and

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[228] *The People and the Collectivist*, Saturday 10 February 1900, p.2.
[229] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Thursday 20 November 1913, p.6.
[230] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Friday 22 December 1905, p.3.
[231] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 18 April 1917, p.3.
[232] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Friday 27 October 1893, p.8.
[233] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Friday 13 June 1930, p.11.

those at the Catholic School and elderly also received rations. It was necessary that school day distribution was extended to the holidays and ran until 1936.[234]

The Friendly Societies were also prominent in providing help and these included the Independent Order of Rechabites – Lily of the Valley Tent, and the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows - Pride of West Wallsend Lodge.[235] (See Social Institutions)

The West Wallsend Co-operative Women's Guild gave assistance to the "handicapped" and raised money for such projects as a heart machine at Wallsend Hospital. They did this through subscription, housie and picnics; holding their meetings at the Masonic Hall.[236]

During the Depression many received the dole, which included vouchers for spending. The West Wallsend Co-operative Store gave credit for the unspent portions of these vouchers and even produced its own tokens in copper, brass and aluminium.[237]

Religion

The West Wallsend/Holmesville communities' religious sects have included not only the usual range of British Protestant groups plus Catholics but also Mormons. A feature of religion in the communities is that the overall proportions would appear to differ slightly from the average in NSW with Catholics under represented and Presbyterians and Methodists over represented. This could be due to many early residents coming from the Scottish and Welch mining districts.

A survey of religions by family made in 1907 indicate the following proportions:

Presbyterians	173 (33%)
Methodists	140 (27%)
Anglican	153 (29%)
Salvation Army	15 (3%)
Catholic	44 (8%)

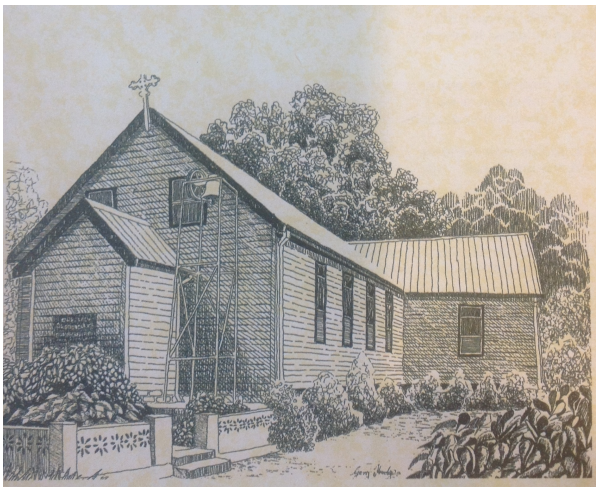
(Why Congregationalist & Baptists are missing is unclear.)[238]

In their original subdivision in 1885 the West Wallsend Coal Company announced that land would be provided for all the denominations. However no sect appears to have erected anything until the first decade of the 20th century, presumably when the relevant populations had grown, although services and Sunday schools were held in various secular community venues. In 10 years, from 1903, beginning with the Congregational Church and ending with the

[234] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, *Book 3*, p.30 & *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 22 December 1934, p.7.
[235] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.32.
[236] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.18.
[237] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 2*, p.78.
[238] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Friday 6 September 1907, p.6.

Salvation Army Hall, seven places of worship were erected in West Wallsend, though only one (Congregational) in Holmesville.

The Presbyterian's seem to have been organised early with a Sunday School regularly held in Presland Hall in 1891.[239] Then on 17th March 1903 the area's first church, the Congregational, was built.[240] This was followed within the same year by the West Wallsend Presbyterian Church, whose pulpit and pews came from a Hunter Street church.[241] The following year, 1904, saw the opening of Our Lady of Good Counsel by the Catholic community.[242] In 1905 the Congregation Church opened a church in Holmesville, which became the Sugarloaf Community Parish of the Uniting Church in 1977.[243] Also in 1905, St James' Anglican Church was opened near the corner of Laidley and Wallsend Rd.[244] The original timber building was replaced with a brick one that is now a private residence. In 1906, a Baptist Church was opened, having previously met in the School of Arts, and the Methodist Church in 1910, while the Salvation Army, which had been meeting in West Wallsend since 1898, sometimes in the Jubilee Hall, opened its own hall in Withers St in 1913.[245]



Our Lady of Good Counsel, Catholic Church

Opened in 1904 it is the only West Wallsend church now built in timber.

(Image from Rees, *Our Lady of Good Counsel – West Wallsend*)

St James' Anglican Church

The original wooden structure opened in 1905 can be seen on the left. The newer brick building is now a residence.

(Image courtesy of West Wallsend District Heritage Group)

[239] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 6 May 1891, p.7.
[240] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate,* Friday 11 March 1904, p.7.
[241] Reynolds, *Early West Wallsend*, p.301.
[242] *The Catholic Press*, Thursday 18 August 1904, p.25.
[243] Price, *Holmesville*, p.61 & 65.
[244] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Friday 22 December 1905, p.3.
[245] *West Wallsend Baptist Church*, p.10 & Price, *Holmesville*, p.70.

The Mormons are the only religious group that do not appear to have erected their own building. Instead they operated in Holmesville and West Wallsend from the early part of the 20th century until at least the 1940s, using Hartland Hall for Sunday School and other services.[246] Although largely forgotten nowadays, they appear to have been a well organised and recognised part of the community:

> Latter Day Saint's Sunday School anniversary services will be held to-morrow. A programme, which includes special hymns and recitations, will be rendered by the girls and boys. Vocal solos and duets will be given by members of the Holmesville Choral Society. Bishop Lewis (Wallsend), will be in charge of both services.[247]

The Baptist Church was closed from 1938 to 1941 and in 1989 suffered earthquake damage, which closed it again before it was re-opened in 1991. While still owning the building this congregation now meets elsewhere.[248]

The Catholic community also had a Convent built in 1912 for the Sisters of St Joseph, who ran the Catholic School in what is now the Church Hall.

The Jehovah Witnesses also formed a community from the 1960's to around 2000 with a church in Seaham Street that is now a private home.[249] The Pentecostal Family Church now operates in Withers Street.

Education

The West Wallsend Public School opened in November 1889 with 55 students in a school building erected for £935 on a site purchased from West Wallsend Coal Company for £100. In 1892 it had 153 students and by 1899, 355. A West Wallsend Evening School also operated at the public school from 1891 to 1892, and again from 1905-1911. An application in 1905 for a school at Holmesville was refused and children from there attended either West Wallsend or Barnsley Public School.[250]

The School houses are: Rhonnda, Seaham, Stockrington and Sugarloaf, which are the names of the local collieries at which most of the students fathers would have worked.

In 1920 the Girls department appointed a "full-time teacher of business principles", and also Art and shorthand teachers. The P&C also requested that the school become an Intermediate High School at that time was refused. In 1935, classes in agriculture were introduced and in 1937 three acres purchased for a school farm, but this experiment was discontinued in 1938.[251]

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[246] Price, *Holmesville*, pp.67-68.
[247] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 14 December 1929, p.10.
[248] *West Wallsend Baptist Church*, p.16, p.33 & p.36.
[249] West Wallsend Community Historical Society, 9/4/2014.
[250] Waters, *West Wallsend High School*, n.p.; *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf, Book 3*, p.27 & Price, *Holmesville*, p.46.
[251] Waters, *West Wallsend High School*, n.p.

St Josephs Catholic School opened in 1912 with 95 students, and had 110 by 1913/14. This number was down to 50 by 1931 and in 1978 the school closed with the buildings used for a pre-school.[252]

The West Wallsend High School opened in January 1964 with an official opening the following year when the staff was 21 and the total students 348.

Death

The West Wallsend cemetery was granted from land belonging to the West Wallsend Coal Company after the town improvement committee approached the mine manager to obtain the land. It was organised as a trust in 1890.[253] It is rare among NSW cemeteries in that its plots are not divided among denominations. Also rare is that none of the churchyards ever received burials, including the Church of England. The earliest recorded burial is that of Annie Baldwin in February 1890.

Joseph Holmes, junior, was an early burial in the West Wallsend cemetery. His death in a mining accident was one of many that were the result of working in this dangerous field. His mother Mary died in 1905 and father Joseph in 1912, all are buried together.[254]

Typical of the numerous deaths associated with mining was that of 18 year old Frank M'Intyre of Holmesville, who in 1919,

> … was found crushed beneath a set of skips in the West Wallsend Colliery, in which he was … employed as a wheeler.[255]

Events

For communities so dependent on coal mining many of the major events of West Wallsend/Holmesville settlements naturally revolve around this industry. The founding of the West Wallsend mine itself in 1888 and its closing in 1923 mark major steps in the area's history. The various strikes, both general and local such as those of 1888, 1913, 1932 and 1949 are also major milestones in community development, surpassed only by the lockout of 1929, which began a period of great hardship for all. For an area so impacted by the Depression, the organisation of the unemployed and their own protests and strikes for better relief provisions in the 1930s were also significant events.

Less dramatic but also mine related was the visit by Japanese Naval Officers to the West Wallsend Colliery in 1903.[256] While in 1910, an explosion at the West

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[252] Rees, *Our Lady of Good Counsel*, pp.8-11.
[253] Reynolds, *Early West Wallsend*, p.128.
[254] Price, *Holmesville*, pp.26-28.
[255] *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate*, Tuesday 23 September 1919, p.4.
[256] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 10 June 1903, p.6.

Wallsend-Killingworth Colliery, although it killed no one, closed this mine for fours years causing much unemployment and so was an event of significance.[257]

Outside the strictly mining, the victories of the local West Wallsend soccer team in the Gardiners Cup, such as defeating Granville 3 -1 at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1921 or against Sydney in 1923 at Hamilton, were major events for these close knit communities.[258] West Wallsend's victory over a visiting Canadian team in 1924, at Hamilton's Tramway Ground, would also have been a major event of the time.[259]

On a national level the First World War as an event impacted on the communities greatly and is commemorated in the West Wallsend War Memorial erected in 1922. It names 60 men of West Wallsend who died, with 273 in total.[260] While on a very local level in 1935 occurred an attempt to blow up a house in West Wallsend. This was a matter of personal business rivalry and resulted in the trial and sentencing of the conspirators in 1935.[261]

The absorption of the West Wallsend Co-operative with the Newcastle and Suburban Co-operative Store in 1964 and then its closure in the 1980s marked steps in the process of the self-contained communities becoming part of wider commercial networks.

Finally, an event known as the "Newcastle Earthquake" had its own impact locally with a number of buildings damaged, including the Masonic Hall at West Wallsend, the former residence of Joseph Holmes, the Holmesville Baptist Church, and a shop that had to be demolished in Holmesville.[262]

Persons

Joseph Holmes, orchardist, mine owner, and property developer remains prominent if for no other reason than that Holmesville continues to carry his name. Joseph Holmes was born in Lancashire where he worked as a miner before he migrated to Australia in 1856, working for a time at mines owned by the Australian Agricultural Company in Newcastle and at Minmi. In 1861 he was granted 101 acres near what was later Holmesville. In 1895 Joseph Holmes bought another 100 acres and subdivided this to create Holmesville. His original slab house was replaced in 1895 with a brick construction that was damaged in the 1989 earthquake and demolished. Joseph Holmes operated a dairy and an orchard while also continuing to work in the mines.[263]

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[257] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 14 December 1910, p.11.
[258] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Monday 26 September 1921, p.3 & *Referee*, Wednesday 10 October 1923, p.13.
[259] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 30 July 1924, p.3.
[260] *'Neath Mount Sugarloaf*, p.55.
[261] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Wednesday 11 December 1935, p.4.
[262] *Holmesville – One Man's Vision*, p.58.
[263] Price, *Holmesville*, pp.23-24.

William Johnston is reputed to be one of the first to have taken up land in West Wallsend and is most well-known for having built the Museum Hotel and for whom Johnston Park is named. Johnston came to Australia in the 1850s from Monkland, Lanarkshire, Scotland and tried his luck as a gold digger in Bendigo and later in Queensland and on the Snowy River, without it seems any success. Eventually he settled down to coal mining near Newcastle and selected land, which he later sold to a mining company. Presumably with the proceeds of this he built the first hotel with an attached hall in West Wallsend as well as investing in other property in West Wallsend, Barnsley, and Killingworth. At the time of his death, in 1904 he was aged 77 and had ten children.[264]

Thomas George Reynold's biography gives a sample of the life of a person who grew up in West Wallsend during the first half of the 20th century. Born in 1904, his father was a brickmaker, and he attended Barnsley Public School, leaving at age 13 to milk cows. After this he kept a horse and cart to carry wood and coal till aged 20, when he attended Evening Continuation Classes. He married when 27, and at 30 operated a tip dray at the colliery, then looked after Safety Lamps. The Depression and the lockout left him unemployed until he became a "Traveller" in 1936, then back in the mines in 1941. After this he studied to be a fitter at Tighes Hill Technical College, in 1945 he worked for Manufacturers Mutual Insurance, then in 1949 he went into Real Estate, and at aged 60 was building houses, before he retired to travel. His wife died in 1983, after which he began to research the local history of West Wallsend.[265]

The selection of 'famous' persons within communities is always an arbitrary process and more worthy people are left out than can be included. However in terms of their links with a wider Australian history *Dave McNeill* & *Thomas 'Bondy' Hoare* are certainly two persons within West Wallsend/Holmesville history that should be further researched.

Carrington Street, West Wallsend - 1906

[264] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, Saturday 3 September 1904, p.6.
[265] Reynolds, *Early West Wallsend*, pp.9-12.

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